

5 Strategies to Help the Type Professional Clarify Client Type

by
Vicky Jo Varner

If it hasn't happened to you already, it will. The MBTI® reports one thing, but the client is unsure. The code doesn't fit perfectly. And by now you're both confused. Maybe you're stuck in "paralysis analysis" with no end in sight for revealing your client's best fit. Or perhaps it seems like you've dug yourself into a hole and everything you say or do just digs you in deeper. Don't you hate that helpless feeling?

Following is a list of strategies and supplemental materials designed to pop you out of that hole and reveal the personality type code that best suits your client. One or a combination of these strategies should ensure your ability to correctly identify a best-fit type code.

Strategy #1—Use Good Descriptions

Remember, the MBTI is accurate 75% of the time at best*, so it's quite natural that even the least skeptical client may question their tabulated result. Keep in mind that, ethically, one never tells a client what their type is—it's not even a good idea to suggest a type for them. (Studies show that clients tend to skew their choices to match the type code of their type administrator! Certainly we don't want clients choosing their own best-fit type to please us, no matter how flattering that may seem.) Bias is always an obstacle to accurate type selection—whether negative or positive!

The best strategy for overcoming that challenge is to provide your client with well-written materials and grant them space to figure it out on their own using a self-discovery process. The finest type descriptions we've come across are in *Understanding Yourself and Others: Descriptions for Self-Discovery* by Linda Berens and Dario Nardi. These portraits are superior because:

- The authors interviewed real people in order to create the composite portraits. (This means the descriptions aren't hypothetical, but based on real-life people in their own words.)
- The descriptions are offered 3 ways:
 1. a brief "snapshot"
 2. how we see that type
 3. how that type sees itself

(This framework provides a 360° view of each of the 16 types.)

Our experience is that clients relate to these portraits better than any other descriptions we've come across. This alone greatly increases the likelihood of their deciding on a best fit!

Strategy #2—Avoid Parts Talk

Sometimes the client feels limited by their type code, especially if it is presented to them as “alphabet soup.” What I mean by that is too much emphasis on the dichotomies—telling a client they are “Ss” or “Ns” or “Thinkers” or “Feelers”—could provoke resistance. The client may instinctively recognize that this framework disowns valuable parts of their Self. It is more helpful to emphasize that *all* the functions are present in our personality, and we merely favor some over others. (That’s why they’re called *preferences*.) In fact, there are 8 “processes” we all access to a greater or lesser degree. To learn more about personality types incorporating all 8 dynamic processes in the descriptions, we recommend *Understanding Yourself and Others: An Introduction to the Personality Type Code* by Linda Berens and Dario Nardi. The descriptions contained there describe the role each of the 8 processes plays within each of the 16 personality types. By acknowledging all of their processes, a client may feel more positive about their code choice and promoted as a whole person. And this feeling can in turn lead your client to a better fit.

Strategy 3—Consult Temperament

If your client is struggling to figure out their function pairs (S/N, T/F), it helps to have them cross-reference with Temperament. Temperament is based on an ancient model of personality type that incidentally maps to the same four-letter type code the MBTI provides.

It’s worth learning the Temperament model thoroughly because it brings a richness to understanding type, but you can always cut corners and simply have the client read the 2-page Temperament descriptions in *Understanding Yourself and Others: An Introduction to Temperament 2.0* by Linda Berens. This strategy helps clarify the question from a broader scope and lets the client guide you to the letters that best suit them. (The back of their book contains a key that maps the four Temperaments to type codes.) Choosing one of these Temperaments will clarify at least 2 letters in your client’s type code.

Strategy #4—Consult Interaction Styles

If your client has difficulty settling on any of the attitudes (I/E, J/P), have them cross-reference with Interaction Styles. This is a model based on the theory of “Social Styles,” and was developed specifically to complement type. It’s a fun and easy-to-use model that slices and dices type in a unique way—and even helps defeat many outdated stereotypes that often get associated with these outermost letters. As before, it’s worthwhile to learn this model for its own value, but you can simply have the client read the 2-page descriptions in *Understanding Yourself and Others: An Introduction to Interaction Styles* by Linda Berens. This helps the client discover their best fit from a broader scope and helps you guide them to the code that fits best. (The back of this book contains a key that maps the four interaction styles to the type codes.) Selecting one of these styles will clarify at least 2 letters in your client’s type code.

Strategy #5—Delve Into Facets

The MBTI Step II® brings with it a whole new set of challenges. After all, it features 40 variables to contend with instead of 8. Always remember the Step II is scored twice—first for the general personality type code, and a second time

for the facets. If these codes do not match, you and the client must reconcile the differences to determine which type suits them best.

For clarifying the first type code result, we point you to our previous 4 strategies for deriving a best-fit code. That leaves the facets, which can be confusing and overwhelming to deal with. We like to provide clients with the workbook *Facets of Type* by Margaret and Gary Hartzler, which includes activities to help your client explore their preferences through the facet lens and delve more deeply into what makes their personality unique. To get the most out of the Step II experience, it's worthwhile to have the client self-select and validate each of the 20 sub-scales independently, the same way most of us are taught to do with the original dichotomies. This in-depth exploration leads to a richer understanding and appreciation of the client's unique behaviors.

Summary

When ancient mariners needed to determine their location at sea, they used a method called "triangulation." Simply finding the North Star was not enough—they used two additional compass points to establish their precise location. One point on its own was unreliable.

Personality type is similar. All too often people rely on one "star"—usually MBTI results—to determine a best-fit type code. They do not take into account that the MBTI and similar instruments are far from foolproof.

When we explore type from more than one angle, we increase the likelihood of getting a best fit. Using triangulation, we pinpoint our position with greater accuracy by defining multiple reference points. Triangulation also helps people discover aspects of themselves differently through each model. Using the Interaction Styles model in conjunction with the Temperament model is a proven method for deriving all four letters of the personality type code independent of the MBTI assessment. So using these tools together nearly guarantees your chances of getting the code right!

We hope these five strategies prove successful for you to help guide your client to their best-fit type. If you have any questions, feel free to contact us at info@TypeInsights.com.

Happy typing!



Note: All the resources mentioned in this article are available online at my website



Vicky Jo is a Self-Discovery Specialist who has been working with type since 1996 when she became MBTI-qualified. She enjoys guiding clients to their best-fit type, and discussing the nuances of type with novice and expert alike. She may be found online at www.TypeInsights.com.

* *Manual: A Guide to the Development and Use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*®, 1985, Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc. Page 209

MBTI® and Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® are registered trademarks of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Trust in the United States and other countries. Consulting Psychologists Press, Inc. is the exclusive publisher of the MBTI® instrument.