**Personality and the Perfect Job**

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Author Kip Parent talks about how understanding your temperament will lead to more rewarding and successful employment

I recently spoke with Kip Parent, the chief executive officer of Keirsey.com, about personality and personality profiling. David Keirsey's book, Please Understand Me: Character and Temperament Types (with Marilyn Bates) has sold millions of copies since it was first published in 1978. The Keirsey organization provides one of the world's most widely used personality instruments online.

I have taken many different personality profile tests myself and they have always gotten me thinking. While I caution that these instruments should not be used to stereotype ourselves or other people, or to make people feel limited in their ability to change, I think they are useful in getting people to understand basic preferences for interaction. Kip and I recently spoke about personality profiling. Here are edited excerpts of our conversation:

Kip, why do you think personality assessment can be important in career choice?

Finding a career that best fits your personality profile may be a factor to consider when thinking about professional success. Far too often, people start out on career paths for the wrong reasons: direction by well-meaning parents or teachers, taking a job "while they figure out what they want to do" and never moving on, for example.

People who excel in their careers are usually highly motivated and energized by their jobs. They wake up in the morning eager to get to work because their career lets them take advantage of the natural preferences and strengths of their personality. Their job is not a chore to be endured but a vehicle to exercise their talents. They achieve the most important of things in job satisfaction: "a fit" with who they are.

So is college too early for people to take this information into consideration? Should it affect what majors students choose and careers they consider?

I wish I had known about this when I was a college student. I fell into the "chose my career by accident" category and happened to luck out in that I enjoyed it and it led to some great opportunities along the way. But there were many careers that I never considered that might have been a great fit for me had I ever worked with a career counselor that used temperament theory.

Through our research we have developed lists of career possibilities for each of the 16 personality types identified by Dr. Keirsey that offer each type high levels of satisfaction and success. I talk to many people who are making mid-life career changes and they consistently tell me that they wish they would have known about the link between their personality and career choice much earlier in life.

Isn't there a danger that employers who use personality tests as part of the employment process stereotype individuals?

Enlightened employers consider personality as only one facet of the selection process. Finding the right "fit" between the job and the person should be a win-win proposition and should be a matter of discussion for any professional interview process.

Some of the personality traits to consider: Do you prefer a structured environment, or is a variety of tasks more important? Do you thrive in crisis situations or value consistent processes? Would you rather work primarily by yourself, or as a member of a team? Are you a big-picture thinker, or do you excel in making sure all the details of a job are completed? Knowing both your own preferences and the requirements of a prospective job can help you (and the employer) make a choice that will give good prospects for ongoing success.

How can personality type affect your relationship with your boss, co-workers, or employees?

Research consistently shows that one primary reason people leave their jobs is they don't like their boss. In our work, we've found that this disconnect is often caused by addressable differences in the individuals' temperaments.

This doesn't mean trying to change their personalities. But if you know the personality type of your employee and what this means in how they hear what you are saying and react to what you do, you can avoid the misunderstandings that often occur because they interpret your words and actions differently than you intend.

With it looking like the economy is heading into recession, many people are worried about layoffs. How can they use personality analysis to advance their career, or start a new one?

First, every job change is an opportunity to find that career that makes you eager to start the day—to find the perfect fit. So the first step is better understanding yourself and what really makes you happy. Doing that will make the job-hunting process much more fulfilling as you're looking for a job that matches your unique talents and preferences.

Once you have decided what you want to do, you face the interview process. The most daunting question for most people is, "Tell me about yourself." Being able to answer this question based on your own temperament and how your personality could benefit you and your potential employer in the prospective job…will set you apart. You will be presenting a holistic picture of a valuable person, employee, leader, or co-worker.

Thanks a lot, Kip. I like the idea of people thinking about how their personality preferences may affect their careers and their lives. Where can people go to find out more?

Anyone can go to our Web site, click on "Take the KTS-II" and receive a free, customized Temperament report.

There's also a lot of good information there including career advice and tips, as well as information of other personality-related areas such as relationships, school, and personal finance. You can even see a temperament analysis of each candidate running for the 2008 Presidential election.