

THE FUTURE OF TYPE

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Rob has spent nine years focused on the practical application of personality type – developing three innovative on-line programs and working directly with more than 10,000 people. Clients range from academic institutions, to non-profits, to multinational corporations. Previously, Rob was an attorney in Boston. He received a BA from Trinity College in Hartford, CT, and a JD from Boston University School of Law. Based in Sarasota, FL, Rob is fortunate to work extensively in the UK and Europe, with more than 20 trips over the last four years (he even has an Oyster card).

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The year is 2034. Electric hover scooters carrying students and faculty zip by the dorm room window of Catherine Clark in her final year of study at Oxford. At the moment, the whole left wall of her room is displaying a video entitled “Module 44: Making the Most of Graduation and the Months Ahead.” The program has just summarized some of the emotions and developmental experiences she is likely to experience in this next phase of her life and has provided practical tips – based on her personality. The information comes from multi-year, ongoing surveys of prior graduating classes, which are also sorted by personality. As the overview video wraps up, Catherine will watch brief video interviews of recent Oxford graduates who share her personality preferences as they provide advice on navigating graduation and the months that follow.

Personality-based learning has been an integral part of Catherine’s education. With the help of her advisor and access to the insights of those of like-type who have gone before, Catherine has developed her natural cognitive strengths and balanced herself by tackling out-of-preference activities. Her academic career feels in alignment with who she is as a person and she is poised to move into a professional life that fully leverages her natural abilities and interests. She will have ongoing access to personality-based resources as she experiences different phases of her career and life development. Reaching across the desk to grab a glass of water before she continues, we briefly see her personality displayed on the screen ... wait a moment, what *do* we see? Is the whole program outlined above:

- 1) Based on the Big Five Model?
- 2) Based on her DiSC® score?
- 3) Based on Catherine’s best-fit type?

Here in 2014 ... do WE have any control over what Catherine will see?

Over the past few decades, personality type principles have increasingly seeped into the mainstream consciousness through media and technology. This process has created two interesting and separate communities:

Group A: the millions of people going online and seeking out information about personality type – Susan Cain’s TED talk¹ alone has garnered 7.6 million views (and that’s just about Introversion!). Each week it seems there is a new portrait of the 16 types sorted by everything from *Star Wars* to Harry Potter characters. Mainstream awareness and fluency is at an all-time high and Jungian typology resonates for this audience.

Group B: the detractors of traditional psychological instruments whose legions of supporters include scientists, academics, psychologists, as well as best-selling authors like Adam Grant² and Malcolm Gladwell³. They actively seek a departure from instruments like the MBTI® and, importantly, make no distinction between that instrument and the underlying model. Even former champions are asking themselves tough questions.⁴

There are widely divergent paths that await us in the future if one of these groups captures the hearts and minds of educators, researchers, politicians, the media etc. Two powerful forces are converging: the increased appetite and fluency in the mainstream for insights based on Jungian type and the growing visibility of research-backed alternatives and detractors.

A Dystopian Glance into the Future

Let’s imagine that the Big Five gathers more momentum over the next two decades through growing research on the neurology of the human brain and correlation studies related to agreeabil-

ity, conscientiousness, openness, etc. As an increasing number of studies and books associated with the Big Five model come out, is it far-fetched to imagine that corporations and career counseling offices eventually move away from Jungian type toward the more heavily-researched Big Five model? In this scenario, Big 5 terminology becomes the primary language to describe human psychology while the Jungian model is mentioned only as historical artefact. Global type organizations gradually dwindle in membership as those who might otherwise gravitate to our universe instead choose the approach supported by research and embraced by the scientific and psychological communities. As it already stands, the percentage of the leaders in the psychological type community under age 50 is very low. What explains the shortage of people from the younger generations joining our organizations?

components of Jungian type emerges, and provides a true biological foundation and explanation of the preferences.

Our work in the type community filters into mainstream education so that teachers are not only aware of type principles but have the ability to engage and develop the different preferences in the course of their students' learning.

Parents proactively engage with their children to cultivate the child's natural preferences and work to put them on a course for life that is consistent with their type. Imagine relationships where romantic partners see that the fundamental differences with their spouse are natural and positive (instead of spending the first 40 years trying to change them!).



A More Optimistic View

Imagine instead ... over the next two decades, Jungian type becomes the common, neutral language used around the world to describe basic psychological differences. The current mainstream dialogue about Introversion is *dramatically expanded* to include discussion and application of the other dimensions of type. Extensive brain-scan research showing the neurological

Organizations realize the critical importance of cognitive diversity in creating effective teams, achieving results, and work to actively create cultures that embrace a wide range of styles and personalities. These organizations allow for people to leverage their natural gifts to the fullest extent in their professional lives.

HOW Do We Make It Happen?

Assuming the more optimistic view appeals to you, what can we do now to make it happen? This will be the focus of my session in May - working with attendees to draft a "road map" for such a future.

Here are some initial ideas:

- 1) **Appeal to younger generations.** We know younger audiences want engaging, fast-paced learning that delivers immediate insights and results. What if we take the resonance and value we know Jungian type *can* provide and deliver it to global audiences through practical, research-based, interactive, scalable formats?
- 2) **Get scientific.** We need a proliferation of data that correlates type principles with interesting research currently being conducted in all fields. Let's run thousands of people involved in studies on aging, ADD, Asperger's, Alzheimer's, diabetes, and dozens of other topics through the process of determining their best-fit type and examine the data for correlations. Type experts intuitively sense where certain patterns are likely to emerge, (and preliminary research supports it) but we need a LOT more wide-scale research to get the world's attention. Having research that correlates with best-fit type pushes our community into the spotlight.
- 3) **Measure impact.** We need to provide practical, specific advice that people can implement immediately and find valuable. THEN we need to measure the return on investment so that we have clear answers to anyone who asks "Why are we doing this?" Within education we need research-based, results-driven studies to improve learning methods in the light of applying basic type principles.
- 4) **Get scalable.** Achieving most of these suggestions is difficult when limited by the constraints of debriefing an instrument one person at a time. To gather large amounts of data, we need to use scalable online methods that accurately determine best-fit type.
- 5) **Make type learning an ongoing experience.** TypeCoach recently completed a survey of several hundred universities in the US and more than 90% utilize traditional personality instruments like the MBTI®. Students currently receive an introduction to the 4 preferences and how they scored. We need to expand that conversation so that participants "touch" type principles multiple times. Online learning as pre-work, a session focused on application, and online follow-up resources will engage the learner repeatedly and allow them to truly incorporate the insights of type into their lives.
- 6) **Change the language.** It is my belief that we can explain type principles in a simpler manner. Focusing on things that learners can do differently immediately is likely to be more beneficial than outlining the hierarchy of functions. How can we convey the main insights of type in a language that can be shared among friends at the pub?
- 7) **It's not about the instrument.** Most of our detractors have

just had a bad experience with the MBTI®. If they had properly been introduced to the principles of type and seen the value it can deliver, we would probably not hear negative things from them. Regardless of how principles of type are introduced, whether through the traditional MBTI®, a sibling assessment, or an interactive new online approach, we need the participant to receive valuable insights they can use immediately. Each time we focus solely on providing assessment results, we risk creating another detractor from the *model* who had a bad experience with an *instrument*.

It is my belief that the community of type professionals is facing a potential crisis of relevance. Many of the basic principles of type are available to the casual web surfer. However, the real insights and value remains in the hands of the professionals who have studied and used the model for years. We need to connect our knowledge to those who seek it by moving away from emphasizing an assessment and instead emphasizing what people can do differently with the information. We do this by presenting our insights in engaging, interactive and action-oriented formats, by ensuring the experience of learning about type is ongoing, by using simpler language, by connecting our insights to data and research, by collaborating with others in our community to share best-practices, and by speaking up so that our valuable perspective is heard by as many people as possible.

I hope to work with you in May to ensure that, in 2034, Catherine Clarke hears what we in the type community have to say.

References:

- 1 Susan Cain's TED talk can be found here: http://www.ted.com/talks/susan_cain_the_power_of_introverts.html
- 2 Adam Grant's "Goodbye to MBTI" can be found here: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/adam-grant/goodbye-to-mbti-the-fad-t_b_3947014.html
- 3 Malcolm Gladwell's position on the MBTI® is laid out in this New Yorker article: http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2004/09/20/040920fa_fact_gladwell
- 4 A thought provoking article entitled "The Flynn Effect and MBTI" regarding the applicability of MBTI® to younger generations can be found here: <https://medium.com/the-exofiles/79e8e54a6196>

TypeCoach offers 3 online programs to support the type practitioner:



Verifier



Used as pre-work to a coaching or training session, *Verifier* is a 20 minute video and animation learning experience that guides the user to their best-fit type.

Type-to-Type



Ideal for teams following a training session, *Type-to-Type* provides advice for interacting with others based on the combination of types (ENFP with INTJ, etc.).

Coaching



Coaching provides 5 videos and animations for each type focused on maximizing one's career potential given one's natural strengths and potential challenge areas.

- We explain the basics so you can spend more time on *application*
- We provide multiple learning moments with pre and post program resources

Feedback from Practitioners

"This was really terrific. I particularly loved the integration of drawings – it was a great way to hold my attention. Most of today's younger folks are said to have a shorter attention span and a more visual style, so I think this would be a wonderful choice."

"I liked the concept of balance that this approach promotes. By listing the top five strengths and challenges, as well as the ten actions for gaining balance, this approach gives the user key areas for growth and development to focus on. Additionally the five page report is a great tangible resource for the user's future reference."

"This was a treat – clear explanations, delightful cartoons and animation, and easy-to-navigate process. I will certainly recommend this to others. Congratulations on an excellent product."

Representative Clients



Please contact Rob Toomey (rob@type-coach.com) to try these programs and to learn more about international partnership opportunities.