

## Using Temperament and Interaction Styles with Clients for Career Development and Job Transition PART 3 of 3

### Editor's Note

Here is the final part of a 3-part article that originally appeared in the *Career Planning and Adult Development Journal*. It is reprinted here with permission from the Career Planning and Adult Development Network. If you missed articles 1 and 2 in this series, here are the links:

- [Article 1 of 3](#)
- [Article 2 of 3](#)

Linda V. Berens, Ph.D.

Guest Editor, *The Bulletin of Psychological Type*

### The Author



**Carol A. Linden** is a keynote speaker, author, corporate trainer, and adjunct faculty member at Wake Technical College. She has published several articles in the *Bulletin of Psychological Type* and authored *The JOB SEEKERS GUIDE for Extraverts and Introverts*. She is currently working on *The WORK PLACE GUIDE: How to Work with People Who Don't Work Like You*. She is an MBTI Master Practitioner, a member of NSA, a Certified Professional Co-Active Coach (CPCC), and Editor of the *Bulletin of Psychological Type*. She is very grateful to the giants in the field of Psychological Type with whom she has had the privilege to study, including, Linda V. Berens, Ph.D., Henry (Dick) Thompson Ph.D., and John Beebe, M.D. Connect with her in LinkedIn. You can take her classes on [effectivewithpeople.teachable.com](http://effectivewithpeople.teachable.com) and you may reach her at [info@effectivewithpeople.com](mailto:info@effectivewithpeople.com). You can download free tip sheets for your job-seeking clients from her website: [www.effectivewithpeople.com](http://www.effectivewithpeople.com).

### The Article, Part 3 of 3

*Carol A. Linden, MBTI Master Practitioner, CPCC  
Adjunct Faculty, Wake Technical College*

### **Applications Part III: Flexing to Be Effective in Your Own Work**

While we all have access to all four of the Interaction Styles, we tend to have a preference. In our careers, we usually have to learn how to flex and use one or two of the other styles to perform different tasks in our own jobs.

Before I was aware of Interaction Styles, I did what everyone does to some extent—I just kept trying to do my own style, only “do it more.” That doesn’t work at all, of course, if our preferred style isn’t the right style for that task in the first place. I’d like to share three examples from my own work life where consciously switching to a different style made me more effective in a specific job and, eventually, in my career progression.

**When others need more guidance:** I have a vivid memory of a very painful job experience from nine years ago. In the midst of it, I learned about Interaction Styles and it turned my performance around 180 degrees. It quite possibly saved my job.

I was trying to become certified in a small group facilitation process where the participants in a leadership development program tried to apply what they’d learned. I was failing miserably—not to understand the material, but to facilitate the group learning.

While being supervised, I was facilitating and the session was *not* going well. To make things even worse, the expert assigned to supervise me my first time out was *the expert*, the Ph.D. who had created the theory and the entire program. He said to me afterward,

*Your analysis was excellent. You caught some things I didn’t catch.  
But you did not deliver that value in the room. And I can’t explain why.*

I couldn’t explain it either. My job was at stake and even the expert in the room, literally, could not discern why I had been so ineffective.

After returning from a training course in Interaction Styles, I went back into those small group facilitations, and I nailed it. I simply needed to switch to a Chart-the-Course style so that I could help my students get more value out of their learning by providing the structure and direction that they needed from me.

They “didn’t know what they didn’t know,” so they needed more structure and guidance from me, not my usual Get-Things-Going style that invited their input and got their buy-in. They were already “bought in.” What they needed was for me to “chart a course” for them and provide them with more direction. Switching to Chart-the-Course behaviors saved the day, and I got my first hands-on, personal experience of how powerful switching to the right style for the right task could be.

**When a struggling group needs intervention:** Typical of someone with a Get-Things-Going style, I tend to be so informing in my communication, as opposed to directing, that I struggle to take on the more directive In-Charge behaviors. In leadership roles, I tend to blend the Get-Things-Going and Chart-the-Course styles. That seems to be a good combination for me. But In-Charge is so hard for me that, so far, I find that I only turn to In-Charge behaviors when a meeting is going so off-course that I just can’t stand it anymore.

I experience switching to it in a truly visceral way. I stiffen my spine, lean forward in my chair, set my jaw, deepen my voice slightly, and speak with a consciously confident tone of voice. I then say something like, “Excuse me, but I’m thinking we’re somewhat off course here. It seems to me that we did not finish the first project discussion and that we have to agree on the parameters before we can move to setting dates. I suggest we finish the parameters discussion, then see where we are before we move on to setting dates. Will this work for everyone?” Usually participants are so relieved that someone is reeling things in that everyone agrees and we get back on track.

I can imagine this sounds like a rather small version of In-Charge behaviors, which it is frankly. Consider, however, what a stretch it is for me to switch to a style that is so inherently uncomfortable. Perhaps you can appreciate and understand that switching to some styles will be harder for your clients than others. And your clients are probably avoiding their least favorite styles. I certainly do.

Once you understand how much energy it may take to use a different style, you can understand the importance of job fit with preferred style. As a colleague of mine often says,

*It takes a lot of energy **not** to be who you really are.*

Helping clients find a job fit that lets them work in the styles they’re most comfortable with most of the day can mean the difference between a successful experience, a draining experience, or even the experience of failure on the job.

**When others need to be the focus:** Part of my work is one-on-one coaching for managers and leaders. I need you to get a picture in your head of my natural way of being so that you can understand how much I need to flex to be helpful as a coach. I am a blatantly obvious Extravert by preference, and I can be a whirling dervish of ENFP preferences. I'm a professional speaker and I can get and keep people's attention, for hours if necessary.

Now imagine sitting one-on-one with me while you're trying to discuss a difficult situation that you're dealing with. Imagine all that energy, right in your face. My intense version of the Get-Things-Going style is *not* what you need in a sensitive discussion where you may need to be vulnerable. Behind-the-Scene behaviors are what you need from me then. I need to be quiet and thoughtful. I need to listen far more than I talk and to listen profoundly. I need to be able to make it obvious that you have my full attention. I need to break my silence only to ask a question that helps you move forward or helps you shift your perspective so that you are empowered to move forward.

Switching to Behind-the-Scenes behavior in a coaching session is actually a touching and meaningful experience for me. I cannot *live there* because I'm suppressing way too much energy to sustain it, but I can *go there* when I need to so I can be helpful to a client—or a friend, for that matter. If I insisted on maintaining my Get-Things-Going energy in a coaching session, however, I would not be very effective or helpful to a client. Helping your clients understand when to shift styles can help them be successful with the different kinds of tasks that a job may entail.

**How Counselors can help:** As a coach or counselor, one way you can help your clients is to help them flex their style to be more effective not only with other people but also more effective in different tasks that call for different behaviors. Being able to flex when necessary can be the difference between success and failure in the course of a career or when changing careers. Helping a client recognize when a job or environment is not a good fit and what that is costing them may be one of your most important contributions when counseling. The mark you make on a client's life could be truly profound.

## **SUMMARY**

Whether in a stressful job situation, in a job transition, or in an exploratory period trying to figure out what other kind of work might be more rewarding, clients can be overwhelmed. Bringing tools like Temperaments and Interaction Styles (as well as Psychological type and the MBTI® instrument) to the table can bring welcome clarity and make them more flexible and successful in a job, with a job search, or even in a career change. You can help them move forward with

more confidence, grace, and awareness of their own gifts. You can also help them create a more rewarding future for themselves.

## **RESOURCES**

**Berens, Linda V., Ph.D., *Understanding Yourself and Others, An Introduction to Interaction Styles 2.0*, Radiance House: West Hollywood CA, 2008**

I ask my clients to purchase this book for every student. It contains pragmatic, clear-to-follow advice on how to flex your behavior in an interaction so that you can be effective with very different types of people. Even my community college students usually leave the class and purchase this book (which I lend them in class) because it's so obviously useful. The table (on page 38) that describes the seven stages of an interaction for each style is worth the cost of the book.

**Berens, Linda V., Ph.D., *Interaction Essentials: 3 Proven Strategies to Remove Communication Barriers*, Radiance House: West Hollywood CA, 2011**

I would recommend all practitioners purchase this book. Whether you're working with clients on their own professional development or helping clients who've been laid off or had a "bad end" to a job, understanding Interaction Styles can really help you give clients insights on how they could flex to avoid future difficulties and establish themselves more solidly and successfully in their new job situation.

**Berens, Linda V., Ph.D., *Understanding Yourself and Others, An Introduction to the 4 Temperaments*, Radiance House: West Hollywood CA, 2010**

In addition to the modernized names for each Temperament, which work very well in business settings in particular, Berens helps connect for the reader how the talents that are related to each Temperament serve to help satisfy the core drivers of each temperament.

**Berens, Linda V., Ph.D. and Dario Nardi, Ph.D., *The 16 Personality Types, Descriptions for Self-Discovery*, Radiance House: West Hollywood, CA, 1999**

This is *the* best method I have found for helping clients validate their type preferences. (Once they've validated their Temperament preferences, you're faced with four choices. And if they've validated their Interaction Style, that

intersection is their four-letter type preference nine times out of ten.) I've had a 54-year-old male engineer read the first paragraph for ENTJ and look up at me with tears in his eyes and say, "I feel like someone has looked inside me." To feel fully seen and understood for who you are can be a profoundly moving experience for clients. Just as with Psychological Type, Temperaments and Interaction Styles are invaluable models that can be used to help a client feel *seen* and *understood*, perhaps for the first time.

**Berens, L. V. (2013) "The leading edge of psychological type."**  
**Retrieved February 22, 2016, from Linda Berens Institute**  
**website: <http://lindaberens.com/the-leading-edge-of-psychological-type>.**

**Delunas, Eve, Ph.D., *Survival Games Personalities Play*, Carmel CA: Sunink Publications, 1992.**

Delunas is writing for therapists, but I received tremendous value from this book. (I've read the book and heard her speak.) I highly recommend it to practitioners because it will help you identify more quickly ways you might help a client. There are distinct patterns that can be observed when Temperament needs are not met. Delunas provides clues to clients' behaviors and ways to help clients return to their "Temperament core" so that they can come from their strengths again.

**Dunning, Donna. *What's Your Type of Career? Find Your Perfect Career by Using Your Personality Type*, Nicholas Brealey America, Second Edition, 2010.**

Dunning uses the Psychological Type Model, the MBTI instrument, and the 8-function model, not Temperament Theory or the Interaction Styles™ Model. That said, this book is incredibly useful for helping counselors help clients do the sometimes scary discovery work of "what do I want to do."

**Linden, Carol A. *The JOB SEEKERS GUIDE for Extraverts and Introverts*, Fontlife Publications, North Carolina, 2014.**

I wrote this small book out of my seven years of experience volunteering weekly to facilitate job seeker groups. This book helps job seekers get up and running quickly on a productive job search and contains advice for Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials alike. It focuses particularly how extraverts and introverts bring different needs to interviewing, networking, and surviving a job transition with grace and dignity.

**Keirse, David, Ph.D. *Please Understand Me II*, Prometheus Nemesis Book Co, May 1998**

Keirsey's book not only widely popularized Temperaments but also the 16 Types model as developed by Isabel Briggs Myers and known commonly as Myers-Briggs. Keirsey saw that Temperament Theory and the 16 Psychological Types were complimentary models.

**Montgomery, Stephen, *A Modern Guide to the Four Temperaments*, Del Mar, CA: Archer Publications, 2002.**

This small book is a quick way to access common characteristics of each of the four Temperaments. It is both concise and insightful.