# Professional Development: Better Rainmaking

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For the past year, I have conducted MBTI assessments on law firm partners around the country. This assessment identifies how people perceive the world and make decisions. In an unscientific way, I have seen patterns among the partners. To understand the patterns, I'll first explain what the letters represent. Think of these letters or types as preferences, not attributes set in stone. We all have preferences of one thing over another, and due to our upbringing, schooling and work environments we have developed an ability to flex our preferences.

**How It Works**

The first letter is either an E for extraversion or an I for Introversion. These have nothing to do with whether or not you like people; instead it indicates where you focus your energy. Extraversion people gather and gain energy from the world of people and experiences, whereas Introversion people prefer the inner world of processes and reflection. As an example, think about a recent book you read. Did you want to talk to people about it (E) or did you prefer to sit and reflect on it (I)?

Second, we find letters S for Sensing and N for Intuiting. These letters represent how we take in information. Sensors like to use their senses, relying on things that can be measured and are factual. Intuitors look for patterns and the bigger picture. They are looking for possibilities versus the reality Sensors need. If I asked you about the best meal you ever ate, would you describe the ingredients (S) or tell me about the dining experience (N)?

Next comes how we make decisions. Thinkers are represented by the T and Feelers the F. Individuals who use objective, non-personal information to make decisions are thinkers. Feelers make decisions based on the impact the decision would have on people. When your assistant comes in late every day for a week because her children's school changed their start time, would you reprimand her for breaking the rules (T) or work with her to change her schedule (F)?

And the final letters, J for Judging and P for Perceiving, represent how we organize our lives. People who are Judging prefer schedules and timeframes while Perceiving people want flexibility and the ability to be spontaneous. Both can provide excellent outcomes, they just approach them differently. Perceivers enjoy the process while Judgers enjoy the end result. In planning your last vacation did you book a flight and go (P) or did you research the activities and entertainment available before booking the flight (J)?

**Your Rainmaking**

So, how can knowing this support your rainmaking? It's simple, really: By understanding how you approach things, you know where you might need to stretch your preferences and engage skills on the other side of the spectrum. We all prefer one way over another, but when pressed we can adapt to an environment or to new needs in a particular situation. If you are right-handed and you break your right hand, you would learn to brush your teeth, eat and even write with the left hand. It would feel odd, but you would adapt.

Lawyers on the introversion side can use their skills of reflection and deep thought to win over clients with the same preference for thinking things through and having a plan of action. But if the client is on the extroversion side and wants to talk things through and work in teams, then the "I" lawyer needs to flex and draw toward the "E" side. This comfort does not happen overnight so the "I" lawyers need to practice being with people and engaging in group discussions. They should put themselves in situations like giving speeches and working on committees so they can exercise the opposite style. In reviewing the partners I've worked with, it appears that the "natural" rainmakers fall into the "E" camp, while the "I" partners have had to work harder, but can be just a successful.

Sensing "S" lawyers are interested in practical solutions and tend to ask questions about how things work and where more information can be found. This is important for moving matters forward and solving specific situations. However, lawyers who can draw the big picture and project long range plans, the intuition "N" lawyers, might have an easier chance marketing their legal skills as well as their firm's services. Often the "N" lawyers need "S" lawyers on their team to do the due diligence and to track the budget, while the "S" lawyers need the "N's" to brainstorm and look outside the box for solutions. It might not be difficult to believe that I find "S's" and "N's" divided into practice areas. Generally, finding those in Tax, Intellectual Property and other practice areas that are granular have more "S's" while Litigation, M & A and Entertainment have more "N's".

Lawyers typically are very effective at making decisions objectively. This is what they are taught in school and this is how the law works. Clearly, this is the Thinking or "T" side of the spectrum. The Feeling or "F" decision-makers step into a situation to get a sense of how a decision will affect the individuals in the situation. The majority of the lawyers I have encountered fall on the "T" side. There are client situations in which the client clearly benefits from a purely objective point of view, however, when an attorney is trying to develop new business, stepping into the client shoes will pay off. Being able to empathize with the client, even if it's a GC at a major corporation, by acknowledging their stress, budget constraints or any other issue directly impacts their decision to retain you.

Interestingly, the majority of attorneys I have worked with fell into the Judging or "J" side of the spectrum. I always inquire if the lawyer is as organized at home as he or she is at work. Most are. Law lends itself to being a highly organized profession with deadlines and court dates that over shadow the desire to work at a leisurely pace. Perceiving or "P" lawyers often have a harder time managing their client relationships because they are a bit looser in their need to be on top of things.

Clients often like status reports and timelines so they know their matter is progressing. P lawyers need to tap into their ability to be organized to please their clients.

**Conclusion**

As I mentioned, this is all very unscientific, so I decided to do a little research and according to Dr. Larry Richard, J.D., who has conducted years of research on lawyers and MBTI, the most prominent combination of letters is ISTJ (17.8%) followed by INTJ (13.1%) and ESTJ (10.3%).

Since there are 16 combinations, you may not fall into one of these three, can you imagine how helpful it would be to know? When you identify your MTBI rating, you will understand how to tweak and flex your preferences to better adapt to your clients and prospective clients. If you decide to take the MBTI, be sure to seek a certified practitioner to ensure a meaningful assessment and interpretation of the results.

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