



DISC vs. MBTI Assessments

Posted by [Tony Alessandra](#) | [March 28, 2017](#) | [Comments \(11\)](#)

I am often asked about the difference between DISC and MBTI (**Myers-Briggs Type Indicator**[®]) and if there's an advantage in using one over the other.

Both DISC and MBTI are assessment tools that provide insight into personality and behavior. Both are widely respected and used by individuals, organizations, institutions and corporations worldwide. There are, however, a few notable differences between DISC and MBTI:

- The DISC assessment is shorter in length than MBTI (typically 24-30 questions for DISC versus up to 90 questions for most MBTI tests).
- MBTI sorts individuals into 16 four-letter types. According to Wikipedia:
 - **Extraversion (E)/ Introversion (I)** – Extraverted types learn best by talking and interacting with others. Introverted types prefer quiet reflection and privacy.
 - **Sensing (S)/ Intuition (I)** – Sensing types enjoy a learning environment where the material is presented in a detailed, sequential manner. Intuitive types prefer a learning atmosphere where an emphasis is placed on meaning and associations.

- **Thinking (T)/ Feeling (F)** – Thinking types desire objective truth and logical principles and are natural at deductive reasoning. Feeling types place an emphasis on issues and causes that can be personalized while they consider other people’s motives.
- **Judging (J)/ Perceiving (P)** – Judging types will thrive when information is organized and structured, and they will be motivated to complete assignments in order to gain closure. Perceiving types will flourish in a flexible learning environment in which they are stimulated by new and exciting ideas.
- DISC focuses primarily on four dominant behavioral types:
 - **Dominance** – These are forceful, take-charge people: direct, decisive, determined and often domineering. They’re born leaders who are neither shy nor subtle.
 - **Influence** – The friendly, enthusiastic High “I” styles want to be in the middle of the action, whatever and wherever it is. They most value admiration, acknowledgement and applause.
 - **Steadiness** – Steady styles are the most people-oriented of the four styles. Having close, friendly relationships is one of their highest priorities.
 - **Conscientiousness** – “C” styles are analytical, persistent, independent and well organized. They prefer to work quietly alone, emphasizing accuracy and “correctness.”
- MBTI assumes that personality is fixed and unlikely to change, while DISC is more open to the possibility that different situations and environments might bring out different behavioral traits in an individual.

- MBTI is largely an indicator of how people think internally. DISC measures how personality translates to external behavior.

Generally speaking, MBTI is a good assessment tool for the individual looking for self-knowledge. MBTI results tend to be very personal and typically reveal a great deal about an individual's inner self. Although this may sound like an advantage over DISC, this can, in fact, also be a weakness. Because MBTI is so deeply personal and is based on a large amount of revealing data from the extensive MBTI questionnaire, people who take the MBTI may often feel uncomfortable sharing their results with others. This could make MBTI unsuitable or difficult to use in a public environment such as a business, organization or corporation where team building exercises, corporate retreats, staff training and sales meetings take place.

Also, with 16 different personality types and acronyms that are often confusing, MBTI language often fades from the memory of the casual user very quickly. MBTI test-takers are often unable to retain useful information from their personality profile. DISC, on the other hand, offers all of the advantages of MBTI, but with a more user-friendly interface. The simple acronym "DISC" is easy to remember, and, therefore, makes a much more lasting impression on users. It's typical for individuals taking the DISC assessment to remember their results years after taking the initial assessment.

Because the DISC assessment is specific to whatever environment you have in mind when taking the assessment, results tend not to be as intimate or personal as MBTI. It's easier for individuals taking the DISC assessment to share their results, confident that though the assessment results might reveal their work personality, their private self can remain protected.

Major advantages for DISC over MBTI for most situations:

- **People remember DISC long after they hear about it.** Other models, such as **MBTI**, are more difficult to recall. It is hard to apply what you cannot remember.

- **DISC is easy to apply and is less theoretical** than Both are solid and widely used. It's not a matter of which model is right, but which one best suits the intended use.
- **DISC can easily be visualized and explained in a circular or quadrant diagram.** **MBTI** may be helpful, but difficult to diagram in a simple manner. **DISC** can be illustrated in a way that even young children can understand. However, **DISC** is not so simplistic that it cannot yield in-depth insights.
- **DISC is not just for self-understanding; it provides a framework to understand others and adjust how you relate to them.** **MBTI** is also helpful in this regard. However, to effectively apply the **MBTI** model for two people, you would then need to remember the right combination of eight letters for both individuals and then attempt to figure out the implications on your relationship. **DISC** can be as practical as helping a **Guarded** person learn to be a little more aware and **Open** when the situation calls for it.



Tony Alessandra

Dr. Tony Alessandra earned his PhD in marketing in 1976 and has authored 30 books and over 100 audio/video programs. He was inducted into the NSA Speakers Hall of Fame in 1985 and the Top Sales World Hall of Fame in 2010. He is the CEO of Assessments24x7.com, a company that allows ICF coaches to resell multiple assessments to their clients such as DISC, Motivators, and Hartman HVP.

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Comments (11)



Shelli Hendricks says:

March 28, 2017 at 1:31 pm

This is a thorough and useful comparison of tools. In my coaching practice, I use both instruments, as they each achieve different objectives. Thank you for sharing!

[Reply](#)



shannon raabis says:

April 19, 2017 at 10:45 am

Hi Shelli,

Congratulations, as a successful coach you do need flexibility in what you use to achieve maximum coaching performance with

your client engagements. Not only is it important to see the value in DISC or your clients, but Dr. Alessandra recognizes DISC is important for you as ICF member coach as well. Dr. Alessandra supports your re-certification needs as a coach in addition to helping you with your coaching engagements. You can earn 7 CORE credits for your CCE by taking his on demand virtual approved courses available 24/7 at XTRACredits.com/ICF/

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Sergio Rodrigues says:

April 5, 2017 at 1:00 pm

Would it be possible to reproduce this post on my blog, about self-development and written in Portuguese, mentioning expressly the source, the link of the original article, and bio of the author?

[Reply](#)



Coach Federation says:

April 5, 2017 at 1:05 pm

Hello Sergio, Yes, if you mention all of things you stated, especially the link back to this page. Thank you!

[Reply](#)



Sergio Rodrigues says:

April 14, 2017 at 9:34 am

Thanks for the attention and prompt reply. I really appreciated it.

[Reply](#)

Perfis de Personalidade e Liderança: DISC x MBTI –

sergiorodriguesblog says:

May 28, 2017 at 8:20 am

[...] artigo publicado no site do ICF – International Coach Federation (publicação original aqui), o Dr. Tony Alessandra, PHD em Marketing, autor de mais de 30 livros sobre o assunto, e criador do [...]

[Reply](#)



Liz Wilson says:

July 16, 2018 at 2:54 pm

Thank you for this post. I appreciate that it is on the ICF site as well, since that increases the credibility.

May I publish this as well as one of my blogs? Like the previous request, I would clearly state the resource. Most likely, I will write an introductory section, which I will mark as clearly my words, then provide an obvious reference to your post.

[Reply](#)



Shirshendu Pandey says:

September 19, 2018 at 7:39 am

Biased evaluation in favour of DISC. Clearly demonstrates inadequate understanding of personality psychology. All personality based instruments talk about typical behaviours of individuals. This distinction of inner self and outer self is artificial. In MBTI, there are extraverted functions and introverted functions. DISC is like any other trait tool. Any distinction made is totally artificial and baseless.

[Reply](#)



Matic says:

October 5, 2018 at 12:01 pm

Shirshendu, a very interesting point indeed. Can you please expand on your thoughts regarding relevant differences between DISC vs. MBTI? That is, if you feel there are any?

[Reply](#)



Shirshendu Pandey says:

November 5, 2018 at 8:37 pm

@Matic. It is hard to say because there are at least a dozen different DISC instruments. Some claiming to be behavioural measures, others that of personality, some ipsative and others normative (trait). I would recommend reading *Emotions of Normal People*, the book on which DISC is based. The book provides no clarification about theory, why the four point circumflex model has been proposed. Any instrument

predicting behaviour should be able to predict performance at work. Saville's study called Epsom project compared 20 odd instruments and their predictive power at work, DISC was found to predict no competency adequately (no corrected correlations higher than 0.30). DISC is a trait instrument which doesn't do justice to measurement of personality. I would recommend using Big Five should you need a trait instrument. MBTI is a type instrument and should be used according to Jungian principles (non evaluative, non analytical and non-decisive environments).

[Reply](#)



myles@pcacoach.com says:

November 30, 2018 at 12:32 pm

DiSC and especially the most modern forms of this instrument like Everything DiSC are designed to be simple and memorable without being simplistic.

Rather than read Emotions of Normal People, published in 1928, a more useful read is the excellent Everything DiSC Manual published in 2015 by Wiley, available from Amazon. This brings the reader up to date with the development of the instrument and the research that validates it as one of the most effective tools for looking at an individual's tendencies and priorities (behaviours) given situations and most importantly takes into account the Interpersonal Psychology so useful in dynamic, changing and complex organisational and social groupings.

For the academic, this book also offers insights into correlation and validity of psychological constructs with other instruments. The

erroneous statement above as to competency (the Saville study states that “0.30 is a useful degree of validity”) does not take into account that Saville’s products are designed for different purposes (mainly recruitment, selection and career planning – personality trait) where the Everything DiSC tool is excellent at assessing the needs of leadership development, sales training, conflict management and team building (behavioural change).

DiSC is undoubtedly one of the most widely used and successful tools to be included quite rightly in the Coaches toolkit. What is more individuals use it and remember it long after they have been introduced to DiSC.

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