

## Personality Characteristics of University Sales Students

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The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) was utilized in a study of personality typing of students that were enrolled in Personal Selling or Sales Management courses at four U.S. universities. A total of 323 students were assessed. The findings demonstrate clear preferences for Extroversion over Introversion, but there is no clear delineation in the other characteristic spectra. The most prevalent group was ESTJ (17.3%) followed by ENFP (14.6%) and ENTP (10.5%). These types occurred 1.91, 1.35 and 1.77 times more frequently among the students than within the general population. Implications for instructors utilizing the MBTI are also presented.

It has been estimated that perhaps as high as 80% of all sales organizations use some form of personality assessment either for employee screening, job skill assessment or placement (Zemke 1992; Brock and Petcovic 1993). The most commonly used personality assessment is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator that is based on the model of personality proposed by Carl Jung (1971). Previous research suggests that Jungian personality analysis may explain some of a salesperson's success.

The Jungian personality model is described by four spectra: Extravert (E) – Introvert (I), iNtuitor (N) – Sensor (S), Thinker (T) – Feeler (F), and Judger (J) – Perceiver (P) (Jung 1971; Myers 1980; Myers and McCaulley 1985). From the four spectra a table of sixteen types is formulated, each with a respective four-letter label such as ENTP as each of the sixteen types is a combination of characteristics that provide insight and explanation of preferences and behavior patterns.

Using previous findings, several hypotheses were formulated to test among a sample of students that had elected to take a sales course at the undergraduate level.

*H<sub>1</sub>: More extroverts than introverts select sales courses.*

*H<sub>2</sub>: That there is no difference between the number of iNtuitors and Sensors that take sales courses.*

*H<sub>3</sub>: That more Thinkers than Feelers take sales courses.*

*H<sub>4</sub>: That more Judgers than Perceivers take sales courses.*

*H<sub>5</sub>: That there exists a predominate type group with regard to those that elect to take sales courses.*

MBTI personality assessments were administered to students enrolled in either Personal Selling or a

combined Personal Selling/Sales Management class. These classes were taught at four, four-year universities in the central and western United States. The student sample shows significant over representation of Extraverts with 72.4% of the sample. These occur 39% more often than the population at large. The occurrence of Introverts in the study is only about half of what they are in the general population. ENFP's, ENTP's, and ESTJ's are the most frequently occurring types with *I* ratios of 1.35, 1.77 and 1.91 respectively. EP's and EN's in the sample occurred over 39% more frequently than the population. All Introverted types are under represented in the sample with INTJ's and INFJ's occurring less than 50% frequently than the general population.

The first hypothesis that expected more Extroverts than Introverts in the study is clearly supported. Extroverts also had an *I* ratio of 1.35 compared to the Introvert *I* ratio of .60. These findings are consistent with Waldo and Reschetz (1988) study of real estate salespeople (primarily females).

The second hypothesis states that there is no difference between iNtuitors and Sensors among the sample is also supported. INtuitors and Sensors occur almost equally within the sample at 50.77% and 49.3% respectively.

The third hypothesis suggesting that there would be more Thinkers than Feelers is not significantly supported as there were only slightly more Thinkers (53.6%) than Feelers (46.4%) in the sample.

The fourth hypothesis suggesting that more Judgers than Perceivers would choose Sales courses is not supported either. There is little difference between the Judgers (52.3%) and the Perceivers (47.7%) in terms of frequency, but the *I* ratio for Judgers shows they occur in the sample only 87% as much as the population.

The fifth hypothesis is supported with the identification of a tri-modal set of types that explain 42.5% of the personality types. The most frequently occurring type in the sample was ESTJ (17.3%). This is different than the population estimates in which ISTJ ( $p = 12.6\%$ ) is the most frequent type, followed by ESTJ ( $p = 12\%$ ). ENFP (14.6%) and ENTP (10.5%) as the next most frequently occurring types in the sample.