

You've Got Personality

Even before Carl Jung studied human personality and identified four types of personalities (thinker, sensor, feeler, intuitor), great thinkers have realized that they could group people based upon their dominant behaviours. With a wide variety of personality theories available today, companies are using the study of human behaviour to help employees better **understand** one another and communicate more effectively.

Historical connections of personality theories

There is some very old thinking behind even the newest personality theories, starting as far back as ancient observations of nature. The four elements of air, earth, water and fire have been referenced as early attempts to define aspects of human personality that appear relevant even today.

Many of the personality theories in use today group human personalities into two or four categories, using a quadrant approach to illustrate variations on these major groupings. Despite the differences in language and philosophy, a few common themes arise in many of these theories:

1. People are born with a tendency to behave in a certain way.
2. People are most comfortable behaving in that way.
3. In order to get along with people who tend to behave differently than themselves, people need to understand and adjust to the behavioural tendency of others.

Behaviour as the fundamental indicator

Also common among many theories is the belief that behaviour analysis is the key to understanding oneself and others. Questionnaires, tests and interviews are used to determine one's natural behavioural tendencies so that one can be defined and labelled. Once labelled, people gain insight into why they favour certain behaviours and how they can adjust those behaviours to others.

In the best use of this practice, people embrace the strengths of their personality and address their weaknesses. They learn to read the behaviour of others and adjust their own behaviour accordingly to improve relationships and communication.

In addition to being used as a hiring tool, behavioural theories have proven very effective when used in a learning environment. These theories can form the foundation for improving skills in **relationship-building**, communicating, selling, management and **coaching**. The insights that personality theories bring to learners can open their eyes to new perspectives and new approaches to old problems. The one caveat, however, is to ensure that personality types don't become new ways of labelling people for the purpose of judging and excluding.