



Greater Self-Awareness.  
Better Self-Management.

## The Marriage of Type and Temperament

Temperament was developed separately from psychological type by David Keirsey, who at the time was head of the Counseling Department at California State University, Fullerton. Described in the landmark book, Please Understand Me (Keirsey & Bates, Prometheus Nemesis Book Company, 1984), Keirsey notes the human trend – reaching back to ancient Greek culture – to classify human behavior into four distinct groups. His description of these behavioral groups is both an updating and a deepening of these patterns, the original names of which (Idealists, Rationalists, Guardians and Artisans) had nothing to do with type preferences. As a behaviorist, Keirsey was not interested in the internal cognitive functioning of these styles, but rather the patterns of observable behaviors each was likely to engage in consistently over time.

His temperament model already fully developed and defined, Keirsey then discovered Isabel Myers’ work on the MBTI® assessment and psychological type. Intrigued by the tool and model, he discovered that psychological type (and the MBTI assessment) were effective ways of getting to the four behavioral groupings he found most important.

Psychological type (of interest to Jung and Myers) focuses primarily on brain functioning (how we take in data and make decisions). As such, type theory and type theorists position behavior as a by-product of these mental functions. On the other hand, Temperament (of interest to Keirsey) is concerned exclusively with behavior, and, in particular, what people do consistently and well, i.e. what Keirsey calls “intelligent roles”. This behavioral approach does not rely on – but also does not contradict - an underlying theory of mental functions.

Many people inquire why the temperament groups are distributed so oddly on the type table. The real answer is that the type table, set up to highlight the functions of type theory, put these functions neatly into the rows of the table. Keirsey’s temperament model, however--totally independent of type--was concerned with patterns of behavior, and the most observable, most consistent patterns are the temperament groupings, which happen to be scattered differently on the table. An adherent to temperament theory would claim the issue is with the random way the type table was constructed, not the random scattering of the temperament groups.

### Function Pairs

ST	SF	NF	NT
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### Temperaments

SJ	NF	NT
SP		
SJ		

## The Benefits of Type

Type is a cognitive model that includes eight functions--four functions, each oriented in a different (extraverted or introverted) direction. These various functions combine to form 16 different combinations. Within each of these combinations or types, the preferences develop at a different pace and to different levels of functionality and success. Among these functions that reside in an individual's conscious existence, some are visible to the outer world while others are not – some will manifest themselves behaviorally, and others remain hidden from view.

In short, type theory gives us a rich model that lays out in some detail the complexity of perception and judgment and their development over time. Discovering and working with these many layered insights can be a powerful addition to self-awareness and development efforts for any individual, group or organization, and responsible type trainers and consultants certainly should understand these details, respect them and use them to positive effect in client work, written work and training.

## The Benefits of Temperament

However, it is difficult to bring about immediate action and change in groups and organizations using the Jungian or whole-type approach, for the richness and complexity can be a barrier or even a distraction to learners. Many type users pride themselves on type's not being about predictable behavior patterns or boxing anyone into a system that even tries to anticipate someone's interaction style, but these are exactly the kinds of topics the world of training and organization development are after and look to the MBTI assessment to give them.

Type is so powerful, that we could pull any two-letter combination out of a four-letter type (there are 24 to choose from) and get decent behavioral predictions from them. The power of temperament (the two-letter combinations that Keirsey first focused upon), however, is that there is no other set of two-letter combinations that has the breadth and prediction power of NF, NT, SJ and SP. These four two-preference combinations, when taken together, tend to produce a consistent and observable set of predictable behaviors that can serve as an effective handle on an individual's likely leadership, communication, problem solving, conflict, teaching and learning styles and a host of other things.

## Two Complementary Tools

Given its focus on observable behavior, temperament by itself – without the underpinning of type – overlooks some important personality insights. Type without temperament, however, can be overly complex and hard to put to immediate use. Used in tandem, the two models are hard to beat for offering engaging insight and suggesting practical next steps.

Interested in adding Temperament to your toolbox?  
Learn more about OKA's new [Temperament Skillshop](#) course.

