



Making the Most of Your Style: Tips for Using *ISI* Results in the Job Search and Interview Process

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The interview is the most important 60 minutes of the job search. It is also a complex social interaction, where first impressions play a prominent role. The actions and behaviors required in employment interviews are dictated by several factors, chief among them the personality of both interviewer and interviewee.

Employers are increasingly looking at personality factors as a way of improving selection decisions. They suggest that knowledge of personality and personality type can help job candidates improve their chances of adapting to the interviewer's personality style. Candidates will be more successful in interviews if they can take advantage of their strengths and overcome their weaknesses. Knowing one's interview style—based on personality type—provides an easy framework for understanding those strengths and weaknesses and adapting a more successful approach.

Although being aware of your own interviewing style and being able to adapt to a variety of interviewer personality types and styles is critical, no assessment has been available to help job seekers explore interview styles based on their personality. The *ISI* was designed specifically for this purpose.

However, an understanding of one's personality type has value beyond interviewing. Other personality assessments, such as the *Meyers Briggs Type Indicator*, have been successfully used in many aspects of the job search. Thus a person's results on the *ISI*, while intended to be primarily used to improve interviewing strategy, can provide for a more successful job search overall.

This short guide provides some additional ways to use the *Interview Style Inventory* and the results it provides in a variety of settings and for a variety of purposes. Please keep in mind that personality inventories are designed to give users better insight into themselves so that they can, in turn, make better decisions. Such inventories are not designed to make the decisions for the users.

Using the *ISI* in a Group Setting

The *Interview Style Inventory (ISI)* helps people identify their preferred approach to job interviews. It is based on the idea that because employment interviewing is such a complex process, people need as much self knowledge as possible, and that individuals will be naturally inclined to use certain job interview strategies over others based on their personality. Job candidates who are aware of their interviewing strengths and weaknesses can better explore ways to improve their interview performance. The *ISI* can also help provide a framework to discuss interviewing, as well as create a sense of community and unity of purpose among a group.

When thinking about and interpreting *ISI* results, it is often helpful to establish a group sense of what personality is and the role that it can play in interviewing and other aspects of the job search. The following questions can serve as prompts for a discussion either before or after users take the *ISI*.

Question 1: What exactly is personality?

The group will probably provide answers in terms of whether a person is outgoing or quiet. Discuss the many ways that, over the years, different definitions of personality have been proposed. However, reiterate that most definitions of personality refer to a collection of traits that comprise the psychological functioning of a person. For example:

- “The dynamic organization within a person of those psychological systems that determine his or her unique adjustment to the environment” (Allport, 1937).
- “The dynamic organization, inside the person, of psychophysical systems that create a person’s characteristic patterns of behavior, thought, and feelings” (Carver & Scheier, 2000, p.7).
- “A consistent way of behaving as a result of the interaction between temperament characteristics and social experience” (Deckers, 2005, p. 224).

Question 2: What are personality types?

Many group members may not have heard of the phrase *personality type*. Explain to them that experts who have studied personality have concluded that human beings have distinct personality characteristics in common that can be used to classify people into types and, more importantly, to predict how each type will behave. This provides the basis for how the *ISI* works—by using these classifications as a means of predicting how an individual is likely to act in an interview.

Question 3: Why examine personality types?

Carl Jung (1923) was one of the first theorists to see human behavior in terms of patterns, and he defined four groups of personality types based on four mental functions: sensing, intuiting, thinking, and feeling. Jung further wrote that it is important to identify the way people prefer to function and orient to the world.

In the 1950s, The *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)* was developed based on Jung’s research to help people understand and identify personality types. The *MBTI* identifies sixteen different personality types, but these types are based on four distinct personality patterns which include Intuitive-Feelers (NFs), Intuitive-Thinkers (NTs), Sensing-Judgers (SJs), and Sensing-Perceivers (SPs) (Baron, 1998). The *MBTI* is the most popular assessment of personality types, and it has been used by millions of people to learn more about themselves, make career choices, communicate more effectively, and make good decisions. The four types identified in the *ISI* are highly correlated with the primary types measured on the *MBTI*.

Personality type provides a framework for better understanding ourselves and others. Personality type can be measured and has been used as a basis for predicting human behavior and interpreting how people interact with their environments. More specifically, personality type has been used to assist in career counseling, marriage and family counseling, and team-building.

Question 4: What is the connection between personality type and interviewing?

Personality plays an important role in the interviewing process. Authors who write about effective job search methods suggest that people who are effective in employment interviews must utilize a variety of styles and skills in order to develop rapport with the interviewer. Therefore, interviewees must know and understand their interviewing strengths and work to overcome their weaknesses.

Because employment interviews are complex interactions, many authors suggest that prospective interviewees be able to adapt their personalities to the various stages of an employment interview, which mirror the scales on the *ISI*.

Taylor & Hardy (2004) suggested that most interviews incorporate four distinct stages:

- **Preparation:** In this stage the interviewee prepares for the interview by researching the organization, preparing appropriate questions to ask, and practicing responses to different interview situations and styles. In this stage organization, attention to details, research, synthesis, and precision skills are required. This corresponds most closely to the Analyzer scale on the *ISI*.
- **First Impression:** In this stage the interviewee needs to be congenial and work to develop rapport. Interviewers form an impression of the interviewee during the first few minutes of the interview. In this stage the interviewee must be spontaneous, sociable, optimistic, and energetic. This corresponds most closely to the Energizer scale on the *ISI*.
- **Passion/Skills Presentation:** In this stage the interviewee must passionately and convincingly present qualifications and skills. Interviewees must make a sales pitch by telling their achievement story. In this stage the interviewee must be goal-oriented, driven, eager to impress, and action oriented. This corresponds most closely to the Achiever scale on the *ISI*.
- **Closing and Follow-Up:** In this stage the interviewee must listen well and look for nonverbal cues that signal the interview is over. Once the interviewer has signaled closure, the interviewee should quickly and gracefully finish the interview. Then the interviewee must creatively and quickly follow-up. In this stage the interviewee must be patient, respectful, introspective, intuitive, and creative. This corresponds most closely to the Intuit scale on the *ISI*.

Administering the *ISI*

Prior to administering the *ISI*, instructors and administrators should thoroughly read the *Interview Style Scale Administrator's Guide*. This manual provides information about the theory on which the *ISI* was based, as well as information related to the development of the assessment and reliability and validity data. The technical information included will provide administrators with means and standard deviations of sample populations similar to the students or clients with whom they are working. It is also important that anyone administering the assessment complete the *ISI* beforehand in order to become familiar with the process of taking the assessment, scoring it, and interpreting the results.

Following are some of the questions that you might have about administering, scoring, and interpreting the *ISI*:

When should I administer the *ISI*?

The *ISI* can be administered individually or in a group setting. If you have only a limited time with clients, you can have them complete the *ISI* beforehand. If you use this approach, make sure that the respondents understand how to properly complete the *ISI* ahead of time. Another strategy would be to administer the assessment at the start of a group session. This method is probably most effective when you have plenty of time or are using the *ISI* over a period of time. This allows you to be present to answer questions that students or clients may have as they complete, score, and interpret the assessment. Regardless of which way you choose, much of the group time should be spent discussing the results and helping respondents to identify and explore their interview style and learn ways of integrating all four styles in their next employment interview.

Begin the administration of the *ISI* by having clients or students read the front cover of the assessment. You should emphasize that the *ISI* is not a test and that there are no right or wrong answers. Stress that respondents can easily take, score, and interpret the *ISI*. For more instructions on administering the *ISI*, please see the administrator's guide.

How Should Respondents Interpret the *ISI*?

Step 3 of the *ISI* helps respondents better understand their scores and provides a description of the four scales. Scores will range from 10-40.

- **Scores from 10 to 19 in any section are LOW** and indicate that this style does not match the respondent's personality and that the respondent tends not to use the interviewing strategies associated with this approach.
- **Scores from 20 to 30 in any section are AVERAGE** and indicate that this style somewhat matches the respondent's personality and that the respondent tends to use some of the interviewing strategies associated with this approach.
- **Scores from 31 to 40 in any section are HIGH** and indicate that this style matches well with the respondent's personality and that the respondent tends to use many of the interviewing strategies associated with this approach.

Respondents generally have one or more areas in which they score in the high or high-average categories. While respondents will naturally gravitate towards the interviewing strategies associated with that style, they should concentrate on developing an interviewing approach that incorporates the best aspects of all four styles. The information and worksheet included with the assessment can help with this process.

Encourage respondents taking the assessment not to focus solely on the scale for which they had the highest score, but to explore all four interviewing styles. For example, someone scoring high in the Achiever style should recognize her strengths from that style and make the most of them. However she should also pay attention to the weaknesses associated with that style and the ways to improve. Reading about, understanding, and incorporating some of the positive strategies from the other three styles can help her to overcome the weaknesses associated with her preferred personality style.

Encourage users to read the scale descriptions and take the time to complete Steps 4 and 5 carefully. Emphasize that knowing ones interview style is only beneficial to the extent that they use that information to make the most of their strengths and improve on their weaknesses.

See the administrator's guide for additional information on how to interpret *ISI* scores, including an illustrative case and means and standard deviations for a more comprehensive comparison study.

What are the four scales used on the *ISI*?

Because the primary objective of this instrument is to help people learn more about the primary style respondents use in employment interviews, the *ISI* is organized around four scales that represent the four major personality styles. These scales were chosen as representative based on a literature review related to personality and personality styles and include the following:

- **Achiever:** You are action-oriented and hard-working. You often do not take “no” for an answer. You are self-motivated, confident, and persistent, and you place a great deal of pressure on yourself to succeed. You are respected by others because of your ability to get things done, though you may have trouble getting to know people well. You have innate leadership qualities and tend to rise to the top in whatever you do. You are strong-willed and good at making decisions. You would rather achieve personal goals than please other people.
- **Intuitior:** You are highly intuitive about people and things. You are a good listener and genuinely care about other people, making you a good friend and confidante. You are easy to get along with but are not very forceful when dealing with others. You handle problems courteously and efficiently but prefer to keep a low profile and avoid conflict. You are very productive in your work, and you

find creative ways to solve problems. You often are not very flexible and prefer stability over change. You tend to be calm and collected in whatever you do.

- **Energizer:** You are adventurous, spontaneous, passionate, and unstructured. You are outgoing and tend to get along well with others, though you try to avoid confrontation. You like to engage in a variety of tasks and are open to change, but you are also impulsive and get restless or bored easily. You trust in your ability to improvise in any situation. You have a high energy level, but often need help channeling this energy in constructive ways. You prefer working with people and do not want to be bothered with details or paperwork. You have limited organizational skills, but your enthusiasm makes you a good motivator.
- **Analyzer:** You are very logical in all you do. You prefer to work with data and ideas and would rather work by yourself than as part of a group. You are willing to spend a great deal of energy to complete projects you have started; however, you often get bogged down in details and lose sight of the end results. You are often viewed by others as a deep thinker, and make decisions only after having all the facts. You tend to be objective and unemotional. You value critical thinking and don't often act on impulse.

Inform respondents that their personalities are not one-dimensional, and that they are likely to identify with some aspects of all four personality types. However, they are more likely to use the interview style associated with their most dominant personality type, and should take that into consideration when assessing their strengths and weaknesses.

Exercises and Activities for Use with the *ISI*

As mentioned previously, the *ISI* provides an ideal starting point for introspection and group discussions. The following set of exercises and activities can help respondents learn more about themselves and how their primary interview style, as well as the three other styles, can be used more effectively in employment interviews and other aspects of the job search.

My Interviewing Profile

Now that you have completed the *Interview Style Inventory* and have a better sense of what your interviewing strengths are, use the worksheet below to create your Interviewing Profile. Reflect back on previous employment interviews and list times when you were able to use those strengths to your benefit.

Name: _____

My preferred interviewing style: _____

The greatest strength of this style: _____

Instances and examples when I was able to use this strength to my advantage:

The second greatest strength of this style: _____

Instances and examples when I was able to use this strength to my advantage:

The third greatest strength of this style: _____

Instances and examples when I was able to use this strength to my advantage:

The greatest weakness of this style: _____

Ways I will overcome this weakness:

Identifying Interviewing Strengths

Look at the interviewing behavior in the left hand column of the chart below. Next, identify which of the four styles probably excels in that interviewing behavior. Write your answers in the right-hand column next to the specific interviewing behavior.

| Achiever | Intuitior | Energizer | Analyzer |
|--|----------------------|-----------|----------|
| Interviewing Behavior | Which Style is Best? | | |
| Talking with the interviewer | | | |
| Researching organizations before the interview | | | |
| Interpreting interviewer nonverbal communication | | | |
| Developing rapport with interviewer | | | |
| Developing a list of question to ask the interviewer | | | |
| Being optimistic and passionate | | | |
| Using effective listening skills | | | |
| Talking about personal accomplishments | | | |
| Remaining calm | | | |
| Including examples to back up responses | | | |
| Rehearsing interview questions | | | |
| Reacting and adapting quickly and easily | | | |

Identifying Interviewing Strengths (Answers)

| Interviewing Behavior | Which Style is Best? |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Talking with the interviewer | Achiever |
| Researching organizations before the interview | Analyzer |
| Interpreting interviewer nonverbal communication | Intuitior |
| Developing rapport with interviewer | Energizer |
| Developing a list of question to ask the interviewer | Analyzer |
| Being optimistic and passionate | Energizer |
| Using effective listening skills | Intuitior |
| Talking about personal accomplishments | Achiever |
| Remaining calm | Intuitior |
| Including examples to back up responses | Achiever |
| Rehearsing interview questions | Analyzer |
| Reacting and adapting quickly and easily | Energizer |

ISI Personality Types and Career Exploration

Achiever: Achievers enjoy managing people in a group or organization and making sure it runs smoothly. They are skilled at leading, guiding, directing and meeting goals.

Occupational clusters include: Management, Law, Finance, Economics, Accounting, Sports Administration, Therapeutic Recreation, Parks and Recreation Management, Finance, Computer Science Technology, Information Science and Systems, Military Science, Political Science

Intuitors: Intuitors enjoy teaching people or helping them improve their life, career, or spiritual well-being. They are skilled at interacting with other people and enjoy work in which they can relate personally to others or to the artistic process.

Occupational clusters include: Elementary, Middle School, Secondary, and Special Education; Early Childhood Education; Social Work; Therapeutic Recreation; Counseling; Psychology; Religious Studies; International Studies; Social Science; Criminal Justice, Dance, Fashion Design, Art, Interior Design, Music, Theatre, Web Design.

Energizers: Energizers enjoy being at the center of attention and have a strong flair for drama. They live in a world of possibilities and tend to be good salespeople. They have strong interpersonal skills and are fun to be around.

Occupational clusters include: Marketing, Advertising, Communications, Public Relations, Political Science, Broadcast Production, Journalism, Real Estate, Travel and Tourism, Foreign Languages and Literature, Education, Financial Planning, Sales, Event Coordination, Merchandising, Human Resources.

Analyzers: Analyzers enjoy and are skilled at calculating, examining, and interpreting data and financial records; discovering, collecting, and analyzing information; and doing research and working with scientific processes.

Occupational clusters include: Math and Statistics, Computer Science Technology, Information Science and Systems, Engineering, Database Management, Engineering, Biology, Medical Technology, Nursing, Communication Sciences, Medicine, Dentistry, Forensic Science, Pharmacy, Sociology, Anthropology, Chemistry, Geography, Physical Science, Physics, Geology, History

ISI Personality Types and Job Search Strategies

Achiever

Strengths

Achievers are comfortable talking with employers both over the phone or face-to-face. They are great at selling themselves and are very articulate, but they tend to avoid criticism. They are good at developing a job search network and conducting informational interviews. They easily establish rapport with interviewers and sell themselves as leaders who work hard to reach the goals of the organization.

Weaknesses

Achievers are not patient with prospective employers and are often unwilling to compromise. Their aggressiveness is sometimes a liability in that they tend to jump into their job search without planning. They will do almost anything to get a job. They often do not think about the consequences of their actions. They may come across as pushy and impatient.

Preferred Job Search Strategies (Check All That Apply)

- Prefers job search methods which will get the most immediate results
- Not patient enough to rely on resumes and cover letters
- Good at phoning and cold calling on prospective hiring officials
- Excellent at applying directly to employers and in building a network
- Confidently presents skills, work experience, and accomplishments on resume

Ways to Improve Job Search (Check All That Apply)

- Must learn to know when assertiveness is detrimental to job search efforts
- Must think before acting
- Must learn to relax and not be impatient
- Must channel energy to being productive in job search
- Must not turn employers off with direct approach

Intuitors

Strengths

Intuitors remain calm throughout the job search. They are good listeners and express themselves well, especially after thinking things through ahead of time. They are capable of establishing and maintaining possible job contacts long term. They are thorough and prepared. They are very courteous and generally manage a well-organized job search campaign.

Weaknesses

Intuitors need to be more forceful when dealing with prospective employers. They often need to learn to more aggressively market themselves. They must focus their attention on finding their own job, thus relying less on assistance from agencies and others. They tend to take criticism and rejection personally, thus they are prone to procrastinate in contacting prospective employers.

Preferred Job Search Strategies (Check All That Apply)

- Relies on the visible job market or on agencies for assistance
- Excellent in applying for positions which are advertised through the newspaper want ads or in mass mailing resumes
- Not very aggressive in phoning or applying directly to employers
- Relies on the help of family and friends in finding job leads

Ways to Improve Job Search (Check All That Apply)

- Need to take control of your own job search campaign
- Must be assertive in your selling approach
- Must learn never to take "no" for an answer
- Must learn to be enthusiastic in your pursuit of a job
- Must make efforts to get things done and not to procrastinate

Energizer

Strengths

Energizers' greatest asset is their willingness to take risks. They are unafraid to utilize all job search methods and are relentless in their pursuit of a job. They are very self-motivated and goal-oriented. They also are confident when making contacts and following up on job leads, and their enthusiasm makes them effective at networking.

Weaknesses

Energizers have trouble organizing their job search campaign. They tend to be impulsive and careless and may have problems following through on all phases of a job search, especially the courtesies. They are often not interested in the paper aspects of looking for a job (developing an effective resume, filling out employment applications, etc.), thus hurting their job search campaign. They are generally not good at collecting necessary facts for finding a job, and they get bored easily and may lose their motivation.

Preferred Job Search Strategies (Check All That Apply)

- Good at coordinating many job search activities at the same time
- Excellent at networking and talking directly with employers
- Does not like to rely on paper parts of the job search
- Excellent at selling your skills to employers in an interview

Ways to Improve Job Search (Check All That Apply)

- Must organize job search campaign
- Must learn to curb impulsiveness
- Must learn to appreciate and utilize paper tools such as resumes, cover letters, and employment applications
- Must work on following through and sticking to the task at hand
- Learn not to be sensitive to criticism and rejection

Analyzer

Strengths

Analyzers need a lot of data and facts before proceeding with their job search. They operate a low-key job search campaign and tend to be very logical in handling their search. They prefer to work with paper rather than people, preferring to mail out a resume rather than follow a job lead. They are able to anticipate trends and forecast future needs. They excel at synthesizing job search information and are great decision makers.

Weaknesses

Analyzers often spend too much time on the paper aspects of their job search (i.e., developing the perfect resume and cover letter). They need to be more assertive in their search and more aggressive in networking. They often get bogged down in the insignificant aspects of the job search and lose sight of the big picture. They may appear arrogant and condescending to employers so they must use tact to get and keep an employer's attention.

Preferred Job Search Strategies (Check All That Apply)

- Relies on paper aspects of a job search such as resumes, cover letters, follow-up letters, employment applications
- Runs a well-organized, logical job search campaign
- Keeps excellent records
- Makes decisions based on logic and careful analysis

Ways to Improve Job Search (Check All That Apply)

- Needs to rely less on logic and more on gut feelings
- Must not get impatient about small details of job search campaign
- Must never lose sight of the big picture
- Learn to be more outgoing and network to find job leads
- Learn to be flexible in your job search approach

Group Activities

Following are some group activities that can be used to initiate a discussion after students have completed and scored the *ISI*:

- Break the class up into smaller groups based on their strongest style on the *ISI*. Ask each of the smaller groups to brainstorm things they can do to incorporate more personality traits from the other three styles. Bring the smaller groups together to share information.
- Divide the larger group into pairs. Ask each pair to interview one another and describe the greatest strengths and weaknesses of using their preferred interviewing style. Each of the people should then ask questions of each other to explore interviewing situations where such strengths and weaknesses were the deciding factor in getting a job.
- Brainstorm a list of television characters that exhibit a personality style similar to those of the Analyzer, Intuit, Energizer, and Achiever. Write these characters down on the board or a flip chart. Then have the group list personality descriptors for each of the television characters.
- Write the four different styles on the board or on a flip chart. Have members of the group role play an employer interviewing a person from each of the four styles. Tell group members that it is okay to exaggerate their responses to the interview questions. After each interview, discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the style that was represented.
- Write the words “Preparation,” “First Impression,” “Passion & Skills Presentation,” and “Closing and Follow-Up” on the board or on a flip chart. Then have students describe the behaviors that they think comprise each of these four parts of an employment interview. Have them read through the descriptions of the four styles on the *ISI*. Have them match the style that is probably best at that aspect of the interview with the specific part of the interview and explain their answers.
- Have each participant make a list of what they find difficult about the interview process. This can be particular questions they have trouble answering, circumstances they struggle to address, problems they have with preparation, and so on. Make a list of these difficulties on the board or flip chart. For each item on the list, discuss the personality type that might be best suited for handling the issue or problem.

These are just some suggestions for how the *ISI* might be used in a group or classroom setting. For how it can be used more specifically as a counseling or assessment tool, please read the administrator’s guide that comes free with each package of assessments or can be downloaded for free from www.jist.com.

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