

Elite!

The Secret to Exceptional
Leadership and Performance

Floyd Woodrow and Simon Acland



I have always been fascinated by individuals, teams and organisations that truly perform at the highest levels. I have worked alongside some extremely talented people, and there is no doubt in my mind that there are core principles that weave their way like a golden thread through the minds, bodies and behaviours of those exceptional individuals. As I have discovered these principles, I have wondered why they had not been taught to me at a much earlier age. In this book, I highlight the elements which have had the most impact on my life and which remain a constant feature of the teams and organisations that truly perform at an elite level.

Floyd Woodrow

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Introduction

FLOYD WOODROW AND WHY YOU SHOULD READ THIS BOOK

This is Floyd Woodrow's book. It is built on his wisdom and experience. His are the stories that illustrate it, his the anecdotes that enliven it. My role has been to pull some of the words together, but I will have failed in that task unless it is Floyd's voice that comes through in those words.

Except in this introduction, that is, because here this is me speaking, Simon Acland. There are two reasons for this: first, because I can introduce Floyd and say things about him which his natural modesty would prevent, and, second, because I want to explain why my own career would have been more successful if I had known thirty years ago what I now know from working on this book.

When Floyd was a boy he developed an unswerving ambition to join the Paratroopers. He could have excelled as a professional sportsman in many fields: boxing, rugby, rowing and others too. He has the necessary physique, the determination, the desire to win, the ability to practise relentlessly in the pursuit of excellence. If he had chosen this course, I am sure that he would now be a household name.

Instead he chose the Paras, for the simple reason that he believed that this was the career that posed the greatest challenges. It was more dangerous, more demanding and more arduous in many different ways. He felt that it would stretch him most. Aged eighteen, he did so well in his entrance tests that the Army

tried to persuade him to join in a different role – as an officer or an engineer. But Floyd was true to his ambition and remained determined to join the Paras at the bottom.

Four years later, after tough tours of duty in Northern Ireland, Floyd became one of the youngest recruits to the elite of the elite, the Special Air Service. During his time in the military, Floyd has had many adventures and has been awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal, one of the highest possible awards for bravery – second only to the Victoria Cross. He has also been made a Member of the British Empire. The military story that runs as a thread through the chapters which follow is *not* the story of those events; we do not want to breach confidences or to break trust. But it is a realistic fable of what might happen ‘behind enemy lines’, and is tailored to illustrate the points we are making in this book.

Whilst in the military Floyd obtained a law degree and later studied psychology. Since leaving the SAS in 2008 with the rank of major, he has been sought after as an adviser to governments, police forces, sports teams and companies large and small. His extremely practical experience of self-motivation and team leadership combines with a detailed understanding of the theories behind it, and it is this special combination that we seek to pass on in this book.

I first met Floyd in the salubrious surroundings of the Lanesborough Hotel at Hyde Park Corner. We come from contrasting backgrounds and have followed very different paths in life. I took to him immediately as an individual. Of course, one has stereotypical expectations on meeting a decorated Special Forces war hero. Floyd fits some of those expectations well – he is tall, muscular, with a steady direct gaze, obviously very strong and fit. But once those hackneyed reactions are over, the main characteristics you notice about Floyd are his aura of extreme calm coupled with a deep reservoir of latent energy. He is easy to imagine as the eye of the storms which so often swirled around him in his military career.

After that first meeting I worried that our personalities were far too diverse for us to be able to work together successfully on this book. After all, I had been one of the boys at school who had always tried to skip games because I disliked getting muddy, cold or hurt. My judgement of Floyd and our different personalities was based entirely on gut feeling, because I had always been sceptical about more scientific approaches to assessing personality. My amateur approach and innate hostility to training, mentoring or advice made me fear that I could not begin to empathise with the book he wanted to write.

My second meeting with Floyd came at the Heathrow Sofitel, where he had just delivered the keynote speech at the annual sales conference of a large gas company, keeping some five hundred delegates spellbound for an hour. There, after his talk, he demonstrated to me scientifically that our personalities were indeed at opposite poles. In the Jungian personality type terminology, which Floyd explains in Chapter Two, he tends towards extroversion, intuition, feeling and perception, and I towards introversion, sensing, thinking and judgement. Then he convinced me that, precisely because his 'ENFP' balanced my 'ISTJ', we could make a great team. He wanted someone, he said, to challenge his thinking and put it to the test. 'You have to have feedback,' he said with a smile, 'Nobody gets to the top of their profession just by being told how good they are. I know you are slightly sceptical, which can only help.' I agreed to do the book. His professionalism had trumped my amateurishness. I had experienced at first hand Floyd Woodrow's motivational skills.

I have spent most of my career as a venture capitalist, investing in early stage technology businesses and helping them to grow. I have sat on the boards of over forty companies. A key part of my job has been to work with the teams running those companies to help them towards their goals. I've been pretty successful in that. Many of the companies that I backed floated on the stock market. Two went pretty much from scratch to being counted among the UK's 250 most valuable quoted companies. Many others were

successfully sold. My book *Angels, Dragons and Vultures* is widely regarded as one of the better guides for entrepreneurs to the arcane world of venture capital.

But I am sure that I would have had more success if I had known at the start of my career what I have learnt from Floyd whilst working with him on this book. I now know that if I had taken the trouble to learn more systematically to understand how my mind actually works, how to comprehend my own character, how to recognise other people's personalities, and how to harness that knowledge to achieve my objectives, I could have gone further. You have no excuse, because you now have this book.

This book is relevant for anyone who has ambitions in their chosen field and wants to do well. It should help you understand better how you and other people work. After arming you with that knowledge, it aims to help you to use it to perform better yourself. Based on Floyd's theoretical understanding and practical experience, it will help you to operate better as a member of a team, and as a team leader, and as a team leader of other team leaders. It will equip you with the motivational skills that you need to take your performance to an elite level.

And now a warning: this book is not for anyone who does *not* want to get any better at what they do.

CHAPTER ONE

The magnificent workings of the human brain

You can't make a head and brains out of a brass knob with nothing in it.

Charles Dickens, *Little Dorrit*

'Behind enemy lines'

Floyd leaned forward in the Lanesborough Hotel's comfortable wing chair and rested his elbows on his knees.

'Simon,' he said, 'let me tell you a story about a couple of teams that I have come across in my time in the Army.'

He paused. I waited in the silence of the pause, expectant and rather excited. The intent expression in his eyes held me a captive audience. Floyd cocked his head slightly to one side and I now saw that the intensity was touched with humour, prompted partly by the anticipation he had sparked in me.

'It didn't really happen like this, but it might have. I think this story will show you what I want to get across in the book. I do like the title *Elite!*, by the way, and I will tell you why in a moment.

'I should probably start with a background word or two about the SAS and how it is organised as this is where I really began to learn the skill of leadership. There is no doubt in my mind that we are the best in the world at what we do. We grew out of the group founded by David Stirling in the Western Desert in 1941 during the Second World War to carry out sabotage missions

behind Afrika Corps lines. It is said that in the desert war his group accounted for more German aircraft by destroying them on the ground than the RAF managed to shoot down in the sky. The name Special Air Service came a bit later, in 1942. Temporarily disbanded as a full-time unit after the war, the permanent brigade now known as 22 SAS was reformed in 1952. Those of us in 22 SAS generally just refer to it as 'the Regiment'. The Regiment has fought in almost every conflict in which Britain has been involved since the Second World War. We have also been responsible for a myriad of actions that have had a significant impact on world events. The best-known was perhaps the breaking of the siege of the Iranian Embassy in 1981. You must remember that. It was splashed across the media – even live on TV. Men from B Squadron saved nineteen out of twenty hostages, eliminating or capturing six terrorist kidnappers in the process. Most organisations would have seen it as brilliant publicity, but the Regiment doesn't much like being in the limelight. Most of the things we have done have never been made public, and probably never will be.

'Since our formation many individuals have been decorated for bravery. One of those awards, I am proud to say, is mine. But – and this is not false modesty – I would not have that medal were it not for those people around me who performed at a truly elite level. I am just the lucky one who gets to wear it. The same can be said for my MBE.

'Today, there is still the one regular Special Air Services brigade. Nobody is quite sure why it was given the number 22. Someone's lucky number, perhaps. There are also two territorial units, 21 SAS in the south of the country and 23 SAS in the north. The Regiment itself is made up of a number of squadrons. Each squadron is commanded by a major – the rank I attained.

'It is a highly select group; many more apply for the Regiment than pass the extremely demanding and gruelling selection process. What is more, it is the most entrepreneurial business I have ever come across – more entrepreneurial than most of the companies you backed as a venture capitalist, I'll bet. What do

I mean by that? Well, it is constantly looking at ways of staying ahead of the competition. One of the exciting things about being part of the SAS is that you are constantly learning new skills. It is truly elite. And, although I will use the word *elite* throughout my stories, all I actually mean is continually pushing the boundaries of our potential. That is within the reach of all of us and why I like the title of the book.

‘Like anywhere in the Services, in the SAS you are expected to obey orders. In action, survival, let alone success, often depends on a rapid, instinctive reaction to what you are told to do. But there is a subtle difference to orders in the SAS. Wherever possible, orders are not narrow and prescriptive. Officers, commissioned and non-commissioned, are encouraged to make sure that their men take responsibility for their own actions, so that insofar as possible how a task is carried out is decided by the man or men doing it. When we plan an action, everyone to be involved in it is expected to make a contribution to that process. Ultimately, the senior officer will take the decision about how it will be done, of course; but all the participants will have had the opportunity to offer input. Even in the field of action, in the heat of battle, we will consult with our comrades if possible. Because we are so well trained to cope with the situations in which we are likely to find ourselves, and have deeply ingrained specialist skills – like some of the parts of the brain that we need to describe in the book – we can make those decisions very rapidly.

‘Most people probably have the idea that there is just one type of person in Special Forces units across the world. I bet you had me down as a stereotype before we met. Of course it’s true that everyone who attempts to join a Special Forces unit has some common characteristics: you have to be tough, mentally as well as physically; you have to enjoy physical activity, and to relish a challenge, in spades. You have to be able to undertake tasks both as an individual and as a member of a team. But these organisations would not be the formidable fighting forces they are without embracing a diversity of personalities. In any great team, you need

different types of people. You need the extroverts, the introverts, the people who analyse the hard facts and those who rely more on their instincts. In the Regiment you will find examples of every personality type.

'I have also been fortunate to be involved in most operational deployments the country has undertaken since I joined the Army in 1981. I can remember each conflict with great clarity, although there are slight differences in my reactions to those events as I became more experienced as a leader.

'The first conflict I can remember was when I was flying back from a three-month training assignment and heard on the radio the news of an aggressor moving their army over the border into the territory of a neighbouring British ally. It immediately sounded like war. Our defence treaty with the country stretched back to goodness knows when. This country was one of our most loyal allies and in a strategically important position. All of this was significant of course, but the most important element of all was that there was a principle at stake. Allow the success of the sort of naked aggression shown by this state, permit the infringement of the rights of a peaceful, independent sovereign state, and the whole world order could begin to totter.'

I found myself nodding vigorously in agreement.

'Obviously at that early stage it was not clear what role I would have in the conflict. What was crystal clear, though, was that I would have a role. The team and I knew we would be assigned the toughest, the most dangerous jobs going. That was what we were there for. What's more, we wanted them.

'Briefings for any deployment pulsate with excitement. But I remember this one better than most. All of us feel some element of trepidation on the eve of a major conflict. But most importantly we look forward to doing what we were trained to do. When I was deployed for that first time on a major conflict, most of us had never taken part in a full-on war.

'I have been fortunate to learn how to operate in the most demanding of environments, whether that was in the bush, in the

desert, in the jungle, in Europe or even in the Arctic. But I was particularly excited about fighting in a desert war. I have always been proud of the Regiment's roots in the thin sand of the Western Desert and David Stirling's daring missions behind Afrika Corps lines. And I had heard stirring stories about the key role played by some of our forerunners in the Omani desert in the 1950s.

'I'd passed into the SAS at the first attempt and four years before that I had been in the Paras. The selection course had been every bit as tough as I had expected and I have no doubt that I passed not because I was the finished article but because the people who selected me thought I had some potential. They were willing to give me a chance. I was intensely proud, at the age of twenty-two, to be one of the youngest soldiers ever to make it. In my superstitious moments I thought that my age matching the name 22 SAS could be a lucky sign. Every soldier who joins the Regiment has to start at the bottom, as a trooper, which for many means a step down in rank. Because I was so young, I was only a lance corporal in the Paras.

'Most of the other people I served with were older than me. But in terms of rank I was in the upper half. However, rank matters less in Special Forces than in some other units. The hierarchy is less strict. The key element is that every member is expected to be a leader or a follower depending on the situation. In any arena I was likely to be a follower of others, but if those more senior to me were to fall in battle then I would *de facto* become the leader. Or I might be put in charge of some specific task.

'In the late 80s and early 90s I considered myself highly professional, but, frankly, I was pretty brash and full of myself. I refused to cut any corners at all. I worked exceptionally hard at my training and expected others to do the same. I judged others too quickly and did not listen well. I was not afraid to let people know if I thought they were underperforming. It was not until later in my career that I learned to smooth off some of the sharp corners of my personality and use empathy more effectively. I now know this is critical to effective leadership, and that you have to take into

account the characteristics of the individuals with whom you are interacting in order to achieve the optimum result. That's another point I want to get across in our book.'



It's all in the brain

Every thought I have, I create. I am in charge of my mind. Probably one of the most important moments in my life was when I realised that everything I do begins with a single thought in my mind and that I control it. Please take a little time to understand this chapter as it is the foundation block of everything you will ever undertake. As I will often say in this book, there is a price to pay to be successful. Understanding how your mind works is part of it.

If you look at your arm, you can get a pretty good idea of how it works. You know what most of the parts are called – elbow, wrist, biceps, triceps, tendons, knuckles and so on. You know that if you tighten your biceps, you raise your forearm at the elbow. You know that if you tense your triceps, your hand will form a fist, and you know why, because you can see the tendons moving in your forearm and on the back of your hand. It may not be simple, but it is clear. It is a comprehensible, mechanical process, cause and effect.

Actually, of course, that is not quite right. In reality, the way you perceive the sequence of events is that you raise your forearm at the elbow and your biceps tighten. You make your hand into a fist and feel your triceps tensing. The effect seems to come before the cause.

Welcome to the workings of the human brain. You think 'I want to pick up that object'. That triggers the act of raising your forearm. You think: 'That person is going to attack me; I'd better defend myself.' That triggers the act of clenching your fist. You don't think: 'I want to raise my forearm, so let's tighten my biceps' or 'I want to clench my fist, so let's tense my triceps.' The unconscious element of the human brain is at work.

Your brain's black box

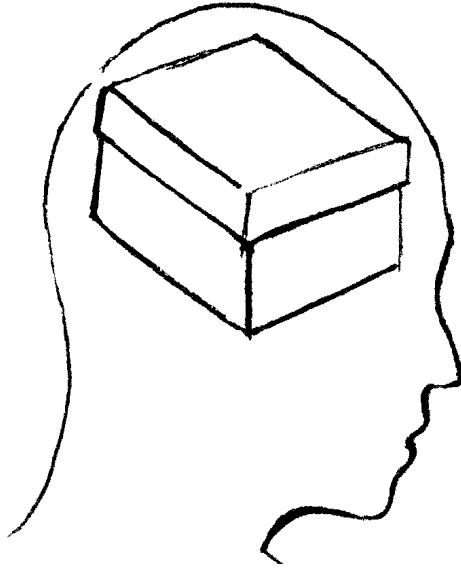
Most people can name the different parts of their arm. Far fewer can name the different parts of their brain. To many of us, our brain is a black box. It produces a result, creates an effect – of some sort, usually – but we do not necessarily understand why. We may have some vague idea that some people are right-brained and left-handed, or vice versa, and that different parts of the brain perform different functions. But unless we have gone out of our way to learn about the brain, we don't really begin to understand the workings of what most people (apart, perhaps, from certain teenagers) would count as their most important organ.

We also know that if we wish to develop the muscles in our arm we can exercise it, do press-ups and lift weights. After a few days, we can see the physical difference, as the muscles have become larger and more toned. We can also sense the difference because the exercises become easier; after a while we can do more press-ups and lift heavier weights. It is far harder to discern the direct effect of exercising or training the brain.

One reason for this lack of understanding is that we cannot see our brains at work. We can see how our arms work; we can watch those muscles get bigger from exercise. As I said before, it is a complex but comprehensible mechanical process. The brain is closed away in its box. We cannot watch it work.

Another reason is the extraordinary complexity of our brains. And the third reason is that, until relatively recently, scientists were unable to study accurately the workings of the brain. It is only in recent years that rapid advances in medical technology and sensing techniques have made it possible for scientists to understand more thoroughly the functions of different parts of the brain and their complex interactions.

MY HEAD'S A BRAIN BOX AND
I NEED TO KNOW WHAT'S INSIDE



What's going on in my head?

In the course of my career in the Paras and the SAS I have done many, many hours of training. Much of it of course has been physical training, or training in special skills – weapons training, unarmed combat and so on. But I have also spent many hours in leadership training, learning about how to lead groups of soldiers and improve motivation, teamwork and capability to achieve success. Some of those training courses have been immensely valuable, others less useful. But I often felt that there was a missing element, a lack of explanation about what was actually going on inside my mind. I had to learn the practice without the theory because the understanding of the theory was not available at the time. Subsequently, I have had the chance to learn about the theory. The advantage of doing it that way round is that it means you know which parts of the theory really work in practice. This is

one of the pillars of this book, which ties together the theory and the practical applications of leadership skills.

Everything we do, every action, every behavioural pattern, starts in our brain. Our brain is our command centre, and it is a command centre that our body cannot disobey. That is why I want to start this book with a brief explanation of how our brains work. I remember once talking to my twelve-year-old daughter about what she was going to do in life. She told me firmly, 'I will make my own decisions about my future, not anyone else.'

'Remember that statement, whatever you do, as you grow older,' I said. 'It is one of the most important things you will ever tell yourself.' It took me until I was in my thirties to understand fully that I am in control of the decisions I make.

My favourite book on this subject is *The Little Book of Big Stuff about the Brain* by Andrew Curran. It is one of those rare books which explain a highly complex subject in a clear and entertaining way. The ability to pull this off always says to me that the author really understands his subject. Andrew Curran draws on a significant body of primary and up-to-date research for his book. I commend it to you if you are interested in delving into this subject at greater depth than I can do here.

In the rest of this chapter I am going to attempt to summarise the aspects of the brain, based on the latest available understanding of it, which are most relevant to our purposes in this book.

There are three main parts to your brain: the reptilian brain, the limbic or paleomammalian brain (both part of your subconscious mind) and the neomammalian brain (part of your conscious mind).

The reptilian brain

The reptilian brain is a fairly basic piece of equipment. It does not care about your children. It does not care about your friends or your comrades. It does not even recognise concepts such as children, friends and family. It sits close to the top of your spinal cord and deals with self-preservation. It makes sure that your heart keeps pumping and your lungs keep breathing, and channels basic

senses like sight and smell. And it carries some very simple selfish reactions. Research on the Mexican green lizard suggests that the reptilian brain is capable of twenty-seven different behaviours: whether to move from the shade into the sun, whether to give way to a larger lizard, whether to grab that ant — all things pretty vital to a lizard's survival. It's important, but as I say, it is a fairly basic piece of equipment.

The paleomammalian brain

As mammals evolved from reptiles about 150 million years ago, our paleomammalian brain began to develop. This is a more sophisticated piece of machinery which began to increase animals' ability to live together in social communities and to nurture their young. With this brain, they started to behave in more complex ways that are not just linked directly to their own survival. These behaviours – nurturing, caring for others, interacting with members of the same species in a social way – are emotion-based. So this is the part of the brain – also known as the limbic brain – which is the seat of your emotions.

The neomammalian brain

Then, a mere four million years ago or so, came the neomammalian brain. This dramatically increased the number and complexity of possible behaviours, and brought the capacity for self-awareness and analysis. This part of the brain is known as the cortex.

To put these different brain mechanisms into context, it is estimated that a human's reptilian brain has fifteen to twenty million nerve cells. Your paleomammalian brain contains perhaps 100 million nerve cells. But in total, the human brain is made up of an astonishing 150 billion brain cells. So the neomammalian brain is around 1,500 times bigger than its more basic predecessors. The number of brain cells you have is one of the things that makes you capable of thousands of different complex behaviours. But, for all of that, wrapped inside your large, recently evolved, rational human brain is that much more primitive emotional early

mammalian brain, and, deeper inside still, that very basic selfish reptilian brain. Of course, this layered structure and the way the different layers communicate has important implications for how your brain works and how you can train it. How often are you aware of which part of your brain is operating at any moment? Are you focused on what is actually happening or are you lost in previous behaviour patterns and reacting without thinking?

Wiring your brain

When you are born, most of your brain cells are blank. What is more, they are mostly not really connected with each other. Bit by bit they learn to communicate, building links and connections. Effectively, they wire themselves together. Brain cells do actually grow extraordinarily thin connections from their cell walls towards other cells that are firing at the same time as they are, to form a connection known as a synapse. The synapse is how two brain cells communicate with each other; at the synapse is a microscopically small gap between the cells over which a chemical signal passes.

Brain templates

These patterns of connections in the brain are often known as templates. Once a template is formed, creating a particular thought or action, it can be used again to recreate that thought or action. These recreations are stimulated by memory and may be sparked off by a smell (famously powerful in evoking memories), by a remark or simply by making a movement.

Another word for the formation of templates is *learning*, in the broadest sense. Interestingly, the creation of templates (in other words, learning) in your brain is controlled by the paleomammalian, limbic emotional brain. Chemically, this happens because the substance that is mainly responsible for forming the synapse connections is dopamine, which is released

primarily by the limbic – paleomammalian – brain. So templates are essentially formed by emotions, and the stronger the emotion that creates a template, the stronger that memory is likely to be. The stronger a memory, the more easily it can be accessed. Clearly this has important implications for training, teaching and communication.

Teaching your brain

Understanding how to release dopamine effectively is key to good teaching and learning. Stress releases dopamine but in such large quantities that it tends to flood the nerve cells indiscriminately rather than forming the specific synapses necessary to create optimal templates. This helps to explain why memories that are created when you are under stress can be very powerful; a bad or frightening moment in the past, for example, can come back to you repeatedly when it is triggered by a specific word or smell. Over time continuous stress can damage the brain and its ability to learn, and may account for conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder.

The parts of the brain that deal mainly with memory formation are called the hippocampus and the corpus striatum. The hippocampus handles conscious memory; the corpus striatum deals mainly with unconscious memory. You have a pair of each – one on either side of your brain. The corpus striatum is part of your reptilian brain, while the hippocampus belongs to the more sophisticated world of the limbic brain. Each one is about the size of your thumb.

The amy-what?

Also on either side of your head, just in front of each hippocampus and corpus striatum, sits another, even smaller bit of brain, the amygdala. This is your most basic emotional structure. In primitive creatures the amygdala is primarily responsible for ‘fight or flight’

reactions and for sexual arousal. In you it also has a key role to play in the creation of memory. This is how it works.

The two amygdalae sit just in front of your reptilian brain close to the top of your spinal column. They contain receptors for one of the stress hormones, noradrenaline. They are also stimulated directly by the vagus nerve, which connects your brain with your main visceral organs – your heart, lungs, kidneys, intestines and so on. This helps to explain that sinking feeling that you can get in the pit of your stomach when you are nervous or frightened. At times of stress, the visceral organs release adrenaline into the bloodstream, which excites the vagus nerve and stimulates the amygdalae. The two amygdalae in turn flood the two corpora striata and hippocampi with dopamine, creating powerful templates. Memories created like this, at times of great stress, are often your most powerful but can be too intense to be useful.



I AM IN CONTROL OF WHAT GOES
ON INSIDE MY HEAD

Conscious and unconscious memory

One interesting feature of memories created like this under conditions of stress is that they tend to reside in your corpus striatum – the unconscious part of your memory – rather than in the more conscious hippocampus. They are therefore difficult to retrieve in a conscious way without real self-awareness.

Dopamine can be released in a much more controlled way through reward and an anticipation of reward. The controlled release of dopamine is how we form the most desirable templates in our brain – or in other words, how we learn most effectively.

New tricks

I once gave a talk to a group of police firearms trainers. A few weeks later I bumped into one of the most senior guys. I remembered that he was one of the people who had sat stony-faced and cross-armed throughout the course. So I was a bit surprised when he came up to me with a broad smile on his face and his arm outstretched. He shook hands with me warmly and patted me on the shoulder.

‘Thanks, Floyd,’ he said. ‘Your talk put me into turmoil.’

I did a bit of a double-take but continued to listen. He saw my surprise and suddenly looked serious.

‘You see, I’d always been super hardline in the way I trained – really demanding. I think I really stressed out the guys who came on my course. A couple of days after your talk, my son – he’s just eleven – came up to me and said he wanted to enter a golf competition. It was on the tip of my tongue to say “No way” – he’d never even picked up a club before. I thought entering the competition would be a complete and utter waste of time and money. We’d have to buy some clubs, too. It would cost an arm and a leg. Worse, he might do really badly and be humiliated, and put off entering competitions for life. I was about to bark at him, bite his head off and tell him not to be so stupid.’

He paused and drew a deep breath.

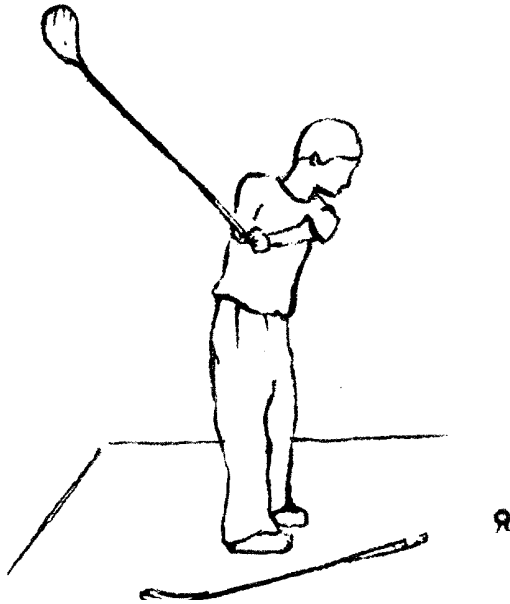
‘Then I thought about what you’d told us about the importance of emotion in training and the power that using it in the right way could unleash. I looked at Rob – that’s my son’s name – and I could tell that he wanted to enter the competition really, really badly. I could also see – and this made me feel pretty bad, honestly – that he expected me to say no. It was a really emotional moment. And I said yes. Saying yes would have been worth it just for the expression of surprised delight that crossed his face when I did. We splashed out on some clubs for him, and he practised really hard in the couple of weeks before the contest. He obviously had quite a bit of natural talent for the game, but I reckon it really was the emotion of the moment that inspired him. He learned really effectively and actually went on to win the competition, because

he looked forward to the reward of winning that much – and to the reward of thanking me for saying yes. I reckon that moment when I said yes is one of the childhood memories that he will always remember – in a good way. If I'd bitten his head off and said no, it might have been even more powerful but in a bad way.

'But what's more, it did not stop there. When I saw the effect, I completely changed the way I ran my firearms training courses. I dropped my hard line and started using emotion in a more subtle way. I started encouraging them to do well rather than tearing a strip off them when they did badly. The trainees who come on the course probably think that I've had some sort of mid-life crisis and gone soft on them. But why should I care? I reckon it is already paying off in results. I haven't lowered my standards at all – I have just been more effective in getting people to meet those standards.

'Before your talk, I'd have said that there was no way I would change the way I'd done things for years. After all, you can't teach an old dog new tricks. And if there was ever an old dog, it was me. But I guess I was wrong about that, too – the brain is such an amazing thing that if you handle it in the right way it can go on learning whatever age you are, or however set in your ways you are.'

THANKS FOR TRUSTING ME, DAD



You are never too old to learn

Retaining your ability to learn, whatever your age, however good you think you are at something, is an essential part of achieving elite performance. You cannot remain part of the elite by standing still. You need to remain open to new ideas and new influences and to be willing to adapt. The good news is that your brain can cope with it if you can. However successful a system is, it will eventually become stale and outdated. It will have to be upgraded. The same applies to the files in your brain.

Of course, there are some functions, typically physical functions, which do sit best in your unconscious memory. Certain forms of repetitive training, and of training under a degree of stress, are valuable if you are going to be called upon to repeat those actions without thinking when you are under pressure. That is why Clive Woodward had fire hoses sprayed at Jonny Wilkinson when he

was practising his kicking in the run-up to the successful 2003 Rugby World Cup. Really good training can result in knowing what is going to happen before it does. It gives you the ability to act without thinking and to react automatically. Good training follows a simple pattern: learn the skill, put that skill under pressure, then test it. By doing this, the wonderful workings of the brain minimise the stress and the strain when you are called upon to perform it for real. I recently watched an international team perform badly in a major competition. Afterwards I spoke with the leadership team and the players, and we discovered that the team had been practising at 80–90 per cent of their potential during training. They had not been putting themselves under real pressure. The results spoke for themselves. If you want to perform at the highest levels, your training must be of an equivalent nature to what you expect in the arena. The old adage ‘train hard, fight easy’ always holds true.

Over time you can build up damaging negative files in your subconscious brain. Often these are fear files: fear of failure, fear of conflict, fear of powerlessness, fear of rejection and many others. Later in the book I will describe how to minimise the effects of negative brain files and other limiting behaviours.

I hope that this chapter has given you a bit more understanding of how your brain works, and a few practical tips for how you can make your brain (and other people’s!) operate more effectively. However, this is only part of the story because brains are not like Ford Mondeos. Every one is different, unique, even before the start of the fascinating process of forming templates and memories that I have just tried to explain. So my next chapter aims to explain some of the typical differences between brains – the different personality types.

So what?

Remember that you are in control of your brain, not the other way round. Like any other part of your body, you need to understand

how it works in order to use it effectively. If you understand how you create the templates in your mind, and the emotions that index those files, you will develop the ability to change them, upgrade them and delete them. To use a filing system effectively, to put data in and get out what you want – especially useful, positive thoughts – you need to know how it is organised.

One of the keys to elite performance is to understand your emotions and how to control and adjust those emotions under pressure. Being in control of the command centre of your actions means that you learn how to diagnose doubt or fear and find ways to adjust your technical skills, tactical awareness, mental toughness and physical abilities. Often we are just told to be more confident, more powerful and more capable without being told how to do it. If you understand how to correctly focus your attention, you will have the best opportunity for elite performance.

Once I realised that I am the one in control of my mind, I began to analyse the files that were helping me and worked out which needed to be upgraded or deleted. I learned that these files exist, even if sometimes beneath my conscious awareness, and that if I wanted to change my behaviour I had to create more powerful files to supersede them and to drive better performance.

CHAPTER TWO

Personality types

Everything that irritates us about others leads us to a greater understanding of ourselves.

Carl Jung

‘Behind enemy lines’

‘So where was I?’ Floyd asked rhetorically. ‘Ah yes, as I said before, I am now going to tell you a story, woven together from things I’ve seen and experienced, about the interactions inside two different teams. The experience of these two teams is drawn not only from my time in the Army but also from my work in the commercial and sporting sectors. As it is my fable, I may even draw on those early days of mine in the SAS.

‘It was winter – January – by the time we headed for the RAF base to fly out to another war-torn destination. I was feeling frustrated because it had taken longer for us to take up our role in the conflict than I would have liked. Like the rest of the country, we had all avidly followed the news of the war in the media – the reports of atrocities, the blazing oil wells spewing clouds of black smoke into the sky, the beginning of the relentless pummelling of key enemy targets by the Allied bombers, and the response of artillery launched in defiance towards the surrounding coalition countries. But for all of us it had been frustrating; we wanted to be participants in the events unfolding there, not spectators.

‘Nevertheless it was a wrench to leave our families. I had been married for five years by then. I had two children – a four-year-old

son and a two-year-old daughter. My wife, Sue, was calm and sanguine – she knew what my job involved – but even so it is tough when we leave our families behind. She had her teaching, and when I was away I could easily picture her daily life. But I knew it would be much harder for her to imagine what I was doing – after all, I did not know myself exactly where I would be and when – and whether I would be in danger at a particular moment. Sue likes facts, although she has an intuitive streak, and she wouldn't have them. I also knew that she tends to keep things to herself so she'd find it hard to share her worries with her friends and family. If I had known then what I know now, I could have described Sue as an INTJ! I also knew that I would have to try to get my life back into balance when I returned, and concentrate on spending some time with my family.

By then I'd been in the Army for a number of years. I'd worked closely with most of the other soldiers deploying with me and we knew each other pretty well. But we also had a number who had just joined us fresh from selection. As a group we were mostly pretty outgoing, drawing our energy from each other. But there were three or four quiet types who shut themselves away in their private world, even in the transport on the way to the air base. By now I knew better than to try to invade their private space; this was their time, their way of preparing mentally for what lay ahead. The rest of us were chatting, joking and full of excitement, but an element of trepidation sometimes lay behind those smiles. My plan was to relax and get some sleep on the flight. I knew it would be one of the RAF's transport planes, which were reasonably comfortable, and I wanted to arrive as fresh as possible. You never know what will be waiting. We hadn't been told much about where we were going at the other end. It is standard practice not to give out unnecessary information. It might just be useful to people who should not have it and do us damage. You never know. I was always pretty relaxed with that; I felt ready for anything. In broad outline I knew why we were going and what to expect. But I also knew that a couple of the team in their heart of hearts would really have liked to have known a few

more of the details. That was just what they were like. So they'd had to get used to the way things were done.

'The flight took about eight hours, I think. With the time difference, we flew through the night and touched down – far too quickly it seemed – at 0800. I didn't get as much sleep as I had hoped. Coming off the plane, the weather was fresh and clear, bracing. It livened me up. The sun was beginning to warm the air after the cold desert night. We piled into covered trucks. The precise destination was still unknown to us, but as we were driving into the sun I could tell that we were heading east.

'It was nearly another eight hours in the trucks so the shadows were lengthening by the time we reached our camp – an airbase somewhere in the eastern corner of the country, ten miles or so from the enemy border. Our lodgings were not the most luxurious, which is hardly unusual – this time it was an aircraft hangar which was already stuffed with boxes of equipment – but I've known a lot worse.

'After a couple of days waiting, the camp can become a frustrating place to be. I filled a lot of my time training and at least we were able to get out of the perimeter to practise our drills. In the military you are constantly training, maintaining fitness levels, and polishing and enhancing basic skills. A key part of the culture is that we are constantly trying to get better at what we can already do well, and learning how to do new things. Before arriving in any conflict area we'd of course learn as much as possible about what to expect. Some of us had been in this environment before. All of us knew not to expect sand dunes everywhere. We knew that the terrain would be much more varied, largely rocky or covered in gravel, in places pretty flat and in others broken up by steep channels. We expected a pretty barren landscape but also a certain amount of scrubby vegetation. It would be dry at this time of the year, but not totally so, as the wadis were often water channels. In places the indigenous population managed to wrest crops of wheat or barley from the ground, and to raise goats and sheep. These desert dwellers were Bedouin, not really specifically

belonging to any country, people whose primary allegiance was to their family and their tribe, and for whom a nation was not a natural concept. And we knew at this time of year to expect extremes of temperature – heat in the middle of the day when the sun was up, and cold at night, even below freezing.

‘Still, however carefully you prepare for a place, there is no real substitute for being on the ground yourself. So while we waited for action, we took the opportunity to familiarise ourselves with our surroundings and environment, to check over our equipment and to finalise our plans for what we would need to take with us when we were ordered behind enemy lines. For we were sure that at some point we would be given that task.

‘There was little real news; we listened to the radio, but I knew enough at first hand about how the Army manages the media and the flow of information in wartime to understand that we were hearing only a small part of the story. From time to time we heard warplanes screaming overhead, especially at night, heading north-east towards enemy cities. I remember that it seemed to me that the frequency of planes increased every night. I guessed that the bombing campaign was steadily intensifying.

‘Then at last the call came for us to attend a briefing. We headed for the briefing area in another hangar, which also contained the communication, planning and intelligence functions. The whole place hummed like a hive, buzzing with quiet, focused activity. Our briefing room had no window; it was hot and airless, with no furniture except a few tables laid out in a square in the centre. Some of us sat round the room on the floor with our backs to the walls. A few others perched on the edges of the tables. A couple of the men paced up and down. I pretended to study a large-scale map of the area that was pinned to the wall.

‘The intelligence officer in charge of the briefing – an SAS captain – came in. Everyone was immediately alert.

‘“You’ll be pleased to hear that the time has come for some action,” he said. “You can see from the map here that there are two MSRs [main supply routes] running east to west. One of your jobs

is to disrupt the activity in those areas. That includes destroying the telephone cables that run in conduits alongside the roads. Our planes have taken out a lot of the comms capability, but the mesh network makes the landlines more resilient and they are still functioning. They've become the enemy's main channel of communication with the missiles that are causing merry hell in the north. You won't have heard it in the media yet, but they bombed a major civilian area last night. It was a bad one and killed a lot of people. Any aircraft found on the ground is a priority target above all others. We believe that the enemy is trying to provoke a retaliation. If they do, it will shake the coalition to its foundations. It is one thing for us to help them sort out a rogue state in their midst, quite another if they find themselves fighting against one of their own alongside their worst enemy. So your second job is to locate planes or missiles and pass any information back to the command centre here."

He paused to draw breath and looked round the room. He did not need to check that he had our attention.

"Your zones of operation will be here and here." He indicated two areas perhaps a few hundred kilometres north of our camp. "You need to prepare for a number of weeks' operation there. Over to you to make your plans."



Nature or nurture?

One of the conclusions of Chapter One is that the way your brain is trained – or the way you train your brain – has a big impact on who and what you are. Your identity is so important – how you see yourself and how you like others to see you. The age-old philosophical debate about whether nurture is more important than nature, or vice versa, is outside the scope of this book. But I think that you will agree that nurture – both the effect that you can have on yourself and the effect that others can have on you – is an

important element in determining who and what you are. If you ever thought that nature determined everything about you, then you probably made a mistake in buying this book. If you really think that you are born what you are, then you are likely to have a fatalistic view of life and won't have much motivation to get better at what you do. If, after Chapter One, you still think that nature determines everything about who and what you are, then you have definitely made a mistake in buying this book. Elite is something you become, not something that you are with no effort.

Let's accept that part of what you are now is what you were when you were conceived, or when you emerged into the world. A blank sheet of paper is a blank sheet of paper, but the fundamental nature of one blank sheet of paper can be very different from another – rough, smooth, cream, blue. Let's also accept that how you train your mind and your body – what you write on that blank sheet of paper – also has a major effect on what you become.

Everyone's different

Wherever you are inclined to draw the line between nature and nurture, I am sure that you will acknowledge that you are different from me, that I am different from you, and that we are both different from everyone else. You will probably also acknowledge that there are some people who are very different from you, and some people who are quite similar to you. And I think that you may also agree that the ones who are quite similar to you may respond in a similar way to similar behaviour and similar situations.

You may be drawn to some of the ones who appear to have similarities to you. And you may like some of those from whom you seem to be very different. After all, opposites attract, or so they say. You may take an analytical enough approach to your own personality traits to be able to articulate how you will behave in given circumstances, and you may be perceptive enough sometimes to predict how others will behave in those same

situations. But wouldn't it be useful to have some tools to help you to understand why you behave as you do, and even more so to help you to understand the superficially peculiar quirks of your fellow men and women; to have an edge in enhancing your strengths and balancing some of your blind spots; to use these skills to communicate more effectively with those who are different from you?

Personality profiling

You may well have carried out personality profiling tests as part of some team-building exercise at work. Depending on your mood at the time, and depending on how well those tests were carried out, and (even more importantly) how well their conclusions were explained, you may have thought that they were a load of old bunkum or that they had removed the scales from your eyes and enabled you to see yourself, your friends and your colleagues in a new light.

And, at the risk of upsetting the sceptics among you, your reaction to the usefulness of those tests had something to do with your own personality profile, and what you are really like yourself. Because there is absolutely no doubt in my mind of the value of personality profiling for understanding and leading yourself, and for understanding and leading those in teams around you. If you read the Introduction to this book, as I hope you did, instead of launching straight into Chapter One, you will know that my co-author started off as a sceptic about personality profiles. I convinced him, and now I plan to convince you.

There are many different types of personality profiling test. The techniques have been adjusted and refined over the years. Some are arguably more suitable for certain purposes, such as recruitment or measuring the likely performance of individuals in a team. In this chapter I am just going to focus on one type, Jungian personality testing.

Jung, Freud and Myers–Briggs

It all started with Carl Jung, the Swiss psychologist who began as a disciple of Sigmund Freud's. Jung published his book *Psychological Types* in 1920 and it sealed his famous split with his teacher. Freud had argued that we are all driven by one fundamental instinct – lust. Had the science of the workings of the brain that I explained in Chapter One been known to Freud, he would have had to construct an argument to say that the amygdala was in absolute control of us. Of course, that scientific knowledge was not available to Freud, so he had to do his best to draw conclusions from his own imperfect observations and suppositions. His theories may have had as much to do with his own sex-obsessed personality and the way that he was himself motivated as with anything else. Jung, also without the benefit of the scientific knowledge that we have now, had the insight to argue that people are different in essential, fundamental ways. He argued that we have many different instincts, or 'archetypes', which drive us from within. These instincts, he claimed, could be of equal importance. The key was each individual's natural inclination to 'extroversion' or 'introversion', coupled with our preference for what he described as 'the four basic psychological functions': 'thinking', 'feeling', 'sensation' and 'intuition'.

At the time, Jung's arguments did not carry the day. His views were more complicated and less sensational than Freud's sex-based theories. So Freud's view of our instinctual drivers became the conventional wisdom explaining our nature, while Ivan Pavlov's theories (he of Pavlov's dogs fame) of the impact of conditioning became the standard explanation for the impact of nurture.

Then, just after the Second World War, Isabel Myers and her mother Katharine Briggs dusted off Jung's *Psychological Types* and created a questionnaire aimed at identifying different personalities. They called their questionnaire the 'Myers–Briggs Type Indicator' (MBTI). Their book of the same name was published in 1962, and it was at that point that the Japanese became interested in

their work. Perhaps this interest and their use of these techniques contributed to the rapid growth in Japanese management expertise and economic power through the subsequent two decades. But Myers–Briggs thinking steadily became more mainstream, and by the 1990s over a million people were undertaking the official MBTI questionnaire worldwide every year.

Undertaking a personality type questionnaire

As well as undertaking the official MBTI test, it is now also possible to find many simple, free, self-service personality type questionnaires online (Appendix I lists links to some of these). Especially if you have not done one before, I recommend that you set this interesting tome to one side for a few moments and take the time out to run through one of the questionnaires. It will only take you ten or fifteen minutes.

But before you do break out, it is important to make one point. The purpose of personality profiling is to help to determine your characteristics and preferences. No questionnaire is 100 per cent accurate, and indeed the way in which you answer some of the questions may vary from day to day as your moods change. No questionnaire can substitute for steady observation of another individual over a period of time, and for the application of emotional intelligence. The questionnaire is a tool, a means to an end, not a purpose or an end in itself. It must also follow that no one personality type is better than any other. Extroversion is not better than introversion, or vice versa. It is not what you tend towards that matters but what you do with those tendencies in order to maximise your potential. If the exercise is to have any value, you must answer the questions with this in mind, and avoid the temptation to give the answer that you think (incorrectly) may show you up in the best light. There is no right or wrong or good or bad. I should also add that I was very sceptical about these tests before I completed the questionnaire for the first time.

Now I know better and, as a negotiator, I am sure that this is an invaluable tool when used and practised.

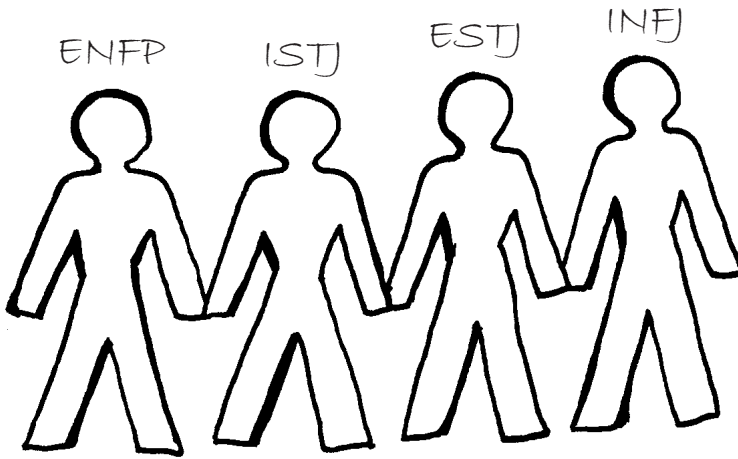
4 x 4 = 16

So you are back!

If you did not know before, you will now know that a Jungian personality type test generates a score between four different tendencies: Extroverted/Introverted (the same jargon coined by Jung), Sensory/Intuitive, Thinking/Feeling (Jung's basic Psychological Types) and Judging/Perceiving (added by Myers and Briggs). You will also know that these combined types are expressed as four letters to give sixteen possible combinations:

| | |
|-------------|-------------|
| ESTP | ESTJ |
| ISTP | ISTJ |
| ESFP | ESFJ |
| ISFP | ISFJ |
| ENFJ | ENTJ |
| INFJ | INTJ |
| ENFP | ENTP |
| INFP | INTP |

All right, I am sorry, even though I am ENFP, I know that 'Intuitive' does not start with an 'N'. It is not my theory. You will just have to come back to my Yorkshire roots with me and swallow the first syllable. Think of it as 'Ntuitive'.



NO-ONE'S A CARDBOARD CUT-OUT

Lost in translation

In fact, I have always thought that a weakness in personality profiling is the jargon used to describe the different types. The words do not really make clear what each means. It may be because Jung wrote his book *Psychological Types* in German and the terms map across to English in an imperfect way. So I am just going to take a little time to explain what each pairing really means. But before doing so, I will repeat my earlier word of caution: the questionnaire is a guide and it does not know you better than you know yourself. If you have scored heavily on one characteristic but believe you fit more with another, trust yourself. However, do not make the mistake of thinking that you should score higher or lower in a particular category just because you like to think of yourself more or less that way.

Scales

You will also know from scoring your own test that each of these characteristics appears as a range or as a scale. It is possible to be right at either end of the scale, or somewhere in the middle.

And it is important to factor this into your understanding of the results. Depending on where you are on the scale, you may have a very strong preference for a certain type of behaviour, or you may be quite closely balanced. It is also important to remember that you are still unique even though you sit in one of the sixteen categories. You are just similar to those in the same category.

There is a temptation to think that you have all of these characteristics in perfect balance. So, when a careful analysis is required, you can bring your 'Sensing' element into play; when the situation demands more gut feeling, you can become more 'iNtuitive'. When a hard-headed approach is right, you can magically become 'Thinking'; when a softer approach is needed, you can move across the scale to 'Feeling'. Certainly, when I first did these tests I was arrogant enough to believe I combined all of the elements equally. I know now that this was a naïve attitude, and that I do have a preference for one side, even though slight, in certain areas. Being a particular personality mix, whether it is ENFP or ISTJ or whatever, is also not an excuse for behaving in a particular way. The purpose is to show where you are strong and where you may have blind spots or filters.

Now the jargon

Extroverted/Introverted is actually about energy and where you get it from. Extroverts get their energy from interacting with people and activities, whereas introverts focus on their inner world of ideas and experiences and get their energy from within.

Sensory/iNtuitive is less clear because you can interpret the two words in similar ways. But what Myers and Briggs meant by 'Sensory' is being observant of the real individual physical things around you, and aware of the details that make up a picture. And by 'iNtuitive', they meant imaginative, more focused on the big picture and its overall abstract or theoretical meaning.

Thinking/Feeling is clearer again. By 'Thinking', they meant tough-minded, tending towards being objective or impersonal with others. 'Feeling' implies more softness and being sympathetic or personal with others.

Judging/Perceiving is slightly confusing again. 'Judging' means making and keeping schedules, whereas 'Perceiving' means being more open to options and alternatives, and more willing to go with the flow.

It is also important to understand how each group tends to like to be presented with information.

Sixteen possible personality type combinations

There is not enough room in this book to explore in detail all the sixteen possible personality type combinations. The original 1962 book, *The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*, is out of print, but if you are interested in delving more deeply into this fascinating subject the closest alternative is *Gifts Differing – Understanding Personality Types* by Isabel Briggs-Myers and her son, Peter Myers. Or you could try *Please Understand Me* by David Keirsey, which some people see as the standard modern work on this subject. Keirsey gives names to different letter combinations, so SPs are Artisans, SJs Guardians, NFs Idealists and NTs Rationals. According to Keirsey, an ENFP (my category) is a 'Champion', and an ISTJ (my co-author Simon's category) is an 'Inspector'. My personal hesitation about Keirsey's book is that he expresses a strong personal preference for Artisans as a character type, which threatens to undermine the impartiality of the process. As soon as one starts making value judgements suggesting that one type is somehow 'better' than another, one can prejudice the whole process because people will tend to want to be categorised as that type.

It's a difficult choice, but my personal preference for further reading on this subject is *Leadership and Development* by Lee and Norma Barr.

Testing your friends

I hope that doing the questionnaire earlier helped you to understand the make-up of your own personality. I doubt it did more than confirm what you already knew instinctively, but it may have provoked the occasional wry smile as it confirmed a particularly strong trait that your friends have told you about in the past.

Of course, you cannot get every person that you meet to complete a personality type questionnaire before you start interacting with them. However, I do have some favourite questions that I might sometimes ask to clarify in my own mind the characteristics that someone tends towards. So if you ask someone whether they can happily stay alone in a silent room for a long time, the 'E' will give a metaphorical shudder and say, 'No – it would be like a prison.' The 'I' will shrug their shoulders nonchalantly and say, 'Yes – for quite a while; I quite like being by myself.' Showing someone a complicated photograph and asking them what they see will result in the 'S' (the 'Sensory' type) describing to you in some detail the objects in the picture; the 'N' (incorrectly for 'iNtuitive', remember) will attempt to explain the concept behind it and make sense of the picture. If you ask how someone likes to be rewarded for successfully completing a task, the 'T' will tend to want a tangible reward such as promotion or money, whereas the 'F' is more likely to say that a simple 'thank you' or a pat on the back is sufficient. Telling someone that they have a notional deadline to deliver a report and asking whether they will hand it over well in advance or on the final date will sort out the 'Js' (early finisher) from the 'Ps' (at the deadline).

Putting up the shutters

All this can be important because if you present information to a particular personality type in the wrong way, the shutters can come down and your message may not get through because of the filters people build deep in their minds. Remember the brain in Chapter

One. Once you build files in your mind they can be lost deep inside and play without you being aware of them. So if you need to get something done, it will probably not be a problem to set a deadline for someone with a 'Judging' personality, but to get the best result out of their opposite, the 'Perceiving' type, may require a different approach. Often you need to be careful about your choice of words and use of language; a 'Sensory' individual is likely to respond best to a clear and accurate factual approach, whereas an 'iNtuitive' individual may require more of a conceptual story.

Body language

The body language of the individual with whom you are communicating is an important feedback loop. If they are really engaged, they will be making eye contact, nodding, perhaps holding their chin in their hands in a thoughtful pose. If you are not getting through, their arms or legs may be crossed and their eyes may be avoiding yours. You may need to remind yourself consciously of their personality type and adapt your way of communicating.



GET A GRIP ON YOUR BODY LANGUAGE

Another important part of the vocabulary of body language is mirroring. Mirroring an individual's behaviour – sitting in a similar position, using similar speech patterns – is a powerful way to win their rapport. Observing whether their body language mirrors yours or not is a good way of testing how much rapport they have with you. Of course, mirroring negative body language is likely to have the opposite effect of reinforcing the barriers between you and the person with whom you are trying to communicate.

There is more on body language in Chapter Four, which is about negotiation and communication.

A hostage to fortune

It was 0400 hours one morning in December. The phone rang. It was the CEO of Britam, the security company of which I became a director when I left the SAS.

‘Floyd – I’m sorry to wake you, but there’s been a kidnapping in Afghanistan. A 24-year-old woman who works for Acme plc. She was out there travelling to Kabul from Pakistan with just an interpreter. There is no sign of him either. They found the car on the outskirts of Kabul. That is all we know. And I am afraid there are some bloodstains on the back seat. No ransom demand has come in yet, but Acme need someone to get them ready for the negotiations that are likely to follow. Can you do it?’

I was wide awake by now. My mind started to churn through the normal sequence of events in these cases. ‘Sure. How soon do they want me? Where are they located?’

‘Their corporate HQ is over in London. Their team will be gathered there by 0800 hours.’

It is rare that the make-up of personalities in any team is the perfect mix. As I have already explained, one of the main benefits of understanding our personalities is so that we can all adapt our styles if we want to when necessary. However, as the lead in this particular situation, I had to enhance and accelerate our communication, so understanding the people I was about to work with as fast as possible was going to be essential.

‘Can you get the profiles of everyone in the team sent across to me? And any other background information that you think will help me gain rapport quickly with them – family, hobbies and achievements. Also some background on the company. I also need all the information about the woman, her family and the interpreter.’

I settled automatically into the three-hour drive, and concentrated on mulling over the situation. It was time to build a game plan and visualise how this was likely to proceed. It was also time to think about a contingency plan. I’ve heard ‘visualisation’ talked about quite often without a clear explanation of why it is necessary. The mind’s filing system does not differentiate

between what you actually see and how you see something in your imagination. I visualise in two ways. First by imagining that I am looking as an observer at the event in which I am going to be involved. That morning, I imagined meeting with three or four people and how our initial meeting was likely to go. Second, I imagined the event as if I was seeing it through my own eyes and watching what was happening. The additional critical element in this second approach was that I connected emotionally with the visualisation. I imagined how the people in this case would be feeling, how I would feel, how the people who had been kidnapped would be feeling. This gave the visualisation substance and meant I was better prepared when I walked into the pressure zone. I could also practise the event as many times as I liked; the practice was free! How often do you actually practise in your mind what a meeting will entail, how a conversation or presentation will actually go?

I got into London a bit early. The overnight security guard was still on the reception desk and he directed me to the boardroom. I was there first, so I started to scan the information I now had on the company and key directors and to develop further the game plan we would need. Then a knock came on the door and a secretary led me to the CEO's office. I found three worried people there – the CEO and his number two, and the Group Director of Human Resources. Their polite smiles of greeting faded fast. Their handshakes were clammy. The reality of the situation now dawned on them. One saving grace I knew from the due diligence we had done on the company was that this team had practised this situation with another negotiator. So at least they had been through the theory behind a situation like this. If I am teaching a company how to prepare, I run through a lifelike simulation with them. I build a picture of the situation and play newsreel footage that I have made to replicate the type of media response that is likely to follow such an event. I use Twitter and Facebook feeds to complicate the situation by criticising the response of the company and blaming the CEO. I use media and journalists to ambush the

team and ask for an instant response, and video the interactions of the team to replay what actually happened during the exercise. This is done to put the team under pressure and enable them to learn how to adapt to a complex and difficult situation. I hoped they had had a similar programme.

‘Thanks for coming, Floyd.’ The CEO looked as if he had had a sleepless night but was still brisk and businesslike. ‘We haven’t got many of the facts yet, so it is hard to make an accurate assessment of the situation.’

‘We do need as many details as possible, I agree, but the important thing is that we get her back safely.’

‘It certainly seems important that we get on with it,’ the CEO’s number two chipped in. ‘We can’t wait until we know exactly what has happened – we need to get on to think about the possibilities. And it seems to me that we need to be really careful about how we communicate with the kidnappers. Clarity of language is going to be important.’

I spent the next hour with them in deep discussion. The CEO was logical, analytical and objectively critical, as well as being decisive and assertive. The HR director was practical, realistic and tended to be optimistic. He had the warm and tactful style that you would associate with a good personnel professional. The CEO’s deputy was a highly capable woman and seemed a good foil for her boss – more interested in theories and concepts, but capable of objective analysis and of asking good questions in an assertive way. Watching how they spoke and interacted, I made the following assessment.

We had possibly got ESTJ, ESFP and ENTP personality types. With me as an ENFP fronting the negotiation, I reckoned it was not a bad negotiating team, but it could be strengthened considerably by someone who was more inwardly focused and who would help to integrate ideas in a systematic, logical way – an INTJ, for example.

We were evenly balanced between sensing and intuition, but, because the CEO tended towards sensing, that would give an edge to this way of absorbing information. The group would respond

well to starting with facts and detail, but I would check that they did not lose sight of the overall picture. We were also evenly balanced between 'Thinking' and 'Feeling', but the edge here went to the 'Thinking' group, again because the CEO was one. So I would need to ensure they were aware of the more emotional elements required in this situation (for example, how we communicated with the families, workforce and media). And finally there was a balance between 'Judging' and 'Perceiving', but the group was once again likely to go the CEO's way and would want order and a resolution as early as possible. I knew that this was not how these situations often play out and that I would need to keep the group aware that we would not be able to follow a precise plan and would have to adapt accordingly. The crucial point was to understand that people are different. They make decisions and have biases that may be different from the way I make decisions and my own biases. Understanding personality types gives me a tool to adjust my communication style and connect with those around me. We now defined our roles and responsibilities and made sure people stayed aligned with the overall strategy throughout. I placed the names of both hostages up on a board so that everyone could see that they were the key people in this. We had the correct people in place to make sure that debate was robust; we could be objective and ensure that our decisions were based on proper analysis of the facts. We learnt from our decisions and adapted them when necessary.

The initial conversation with the hostage-taker made it clear that he had done this before and simply saw it as a business negotiation (although I use this term, it is still extortion, and one must never lose sight of the danger in these situations). This was good news for us as it meant that he wanted to find a practical solution. He also spoke English so we did not have to work through an intermediary. He understood the process and expected to go through a series of discussions with us before defining a price for the hostage. He had all of the answers to our questions very quickly. Proof of life was quickly established. He even ensured that one of the questions we asked was clarified because he did not think we were being clear

and he did not want to risk delay by allowing us to misinterpret the hostage's answer. It became obvious that the hostage-taker was an extroverted type because he talked his ideas through openly, even speaking over the CEO on a number of occasions, and avoided silences. He wanted finite detail of the plans to drop off the money. He was very flexible and it did not seem to matter too much if we had to change plans or timings. He spoke of the woman and his concerns for her well-being and her family. But he also indicated that he was prepared to hurt her if required in order to force our discussions to a conclusion. At least his threats were initially about depriving her of comforts rather than immediate physical injury.

Our reaction to risk was so important now that we needed robust debate; we needed to anticipate all possible contingencies and create different creative solutions where necessary. We also had to learn to adapt our decision-making time from hours in some cases to minutes in others. During this process I became a leader or follower depending on where my strengths lay. Because I understand myself, I also know when I am about to become stressed. It was important that I use my own strategy to rebalance if it occurred. For myself, I know I have to think logically, then factually and then emotionally. I am also aware of when others become stressed and I attempt to rebalance them. I ensured that the team stayed focused on the end result and did not lose sight of what we wanted to achieve in the first place. We also ensured that we understood the environment in which we were working and kept the stakeholders alongside and dealt with any implications the situation had for this team from a business perspective. The team gelled very quickly. They were able to listen to different perspectives, give their views and move forward. Even in tough times when unexpected things happened, such as the involvement of the military and police, the team stayed calm and relied on one another to come up with solutions to deal with them.

The hostage-taker had taken a deeper interest in his hostage than one might perhaps have expected. Because he was so talkative it became easier to get more intelligence from him. As we built an

element of rapport we were able to establish that he had a family of his own and I was able to link the hostage's needs to her own family. I managed to get him to use her name and the interpreter's name so that he would begin to see them as individuals. I had him marked down as an ENFP and this understanding made it easier to handle him as effectively as possible.

Absorbing data

I will discuss in more detail the interaction of different personality types in teams in Chapter Five. For the time being, I want to end this chapter with a summary of how individuals of each type like to absorb data. This is important to understanding both how you interact with the outside world and how you can best interact with others. If you imagine that someone is selling something to you, and you find yourself warming to the proposition, it may be because the product or service is good and something you want. It may also have something to do with how the information about that product or service is being presented to you. The two initials which are most relevant for how we take in data are the middle two, the ‘Sensory/iNtuitive’ and ‘Thinking/Feeling’ pairs. Table 1 summarises the negotiation or sales approach that is most likely to appeal to different personality combinations.

Table 1. Relating negotiating styles with personality combinations

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|---|--|
| <p>STs will want to be shown:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that the product works • how it saves time and money • that it has a good cost-to-benefit ratio • how its results can be measured • all its other applications and benefits <p>STs will want all their questions answered, and will like to try the product before they buy.</p> | <p>SFs will want to be shown:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the product’s practical results for <i>people</i> • its benefits for themselves and those they care about • that it provides immediate results • explicit, not just implicit, benefits <p>SFs will like a presentation that shows them respect and sets the product in a personal context. They will be influenced by personal testimonies from other users.</p> |
|---|--|

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>NTs will want to be shown:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • details of the product's research base • its theoretical background • how it fits a specific strategy • how it will increase competency <p>NTs will want information presented in a credible, factual way that supports the product's far-reaching possibilities.</p> | <p>NFs will want to be shown:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how the product will enhance relationships • how it will help people develop • how it will give new insights • why people will like it <p>NFs will like a presentation that focuses on people's unique gifts, shows that the product will help them find meaning, and is enjoyable and fun.</p> |
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So we've dealt with the workings of the brain in Chapter One. Now we've discussed the theory of different personality types. In the pages that follow I will refer back to what I have covered in these first two chapters to try to draw out some practical lessons.

So what?

You may think that you have a good understanding of your personality and the impact that you have on others. However, a systematic approach to analysing your own personality will take your self-awareness on to the next level. You will gain better control over your behaviour and the effect it has on those around you.

Applying the same principles to those around you and gaining a structured appreciation of their different personality types will give you a clearer idea of how best to relate to others. Your ability to communicate will improve and you will be better able to manage any situation to achieve your objectives.

I use these tools at home with my family, in all my social relationships and most of all when I am working. Whenever I start working with a new group, I take them through a personality assessment. It instantly opens up better communication with the group. It allows me to ensure that I adapt my communication style

when necessary to get my message across without misunderstanding. How often have you heard two people arguing with each other yet saying exactly the same thing? Understanding how you come across, and how your counterparty wants to hear things, are the two essential elements to delivering your message.