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## **BTSA: A USEFUL TOOL FOR COACHES AND CLIENTS**

Jan Newcomb

### **INTRODUCTION**

Accurate assessment instruments enhance the ability to provide timely and cost-effective coaching services to individuals and organizations. One useful instrument is the Benziger Thinking Styles Assessment (BTSA).

The BTSA is an updated application of Dr. Carl Jung's work. I believe it is superior to other assessments in use today, because it is the only instrument I have found that measures "falsification of type," a term that Dr. Jung created to "identify anyone whose most developed and/or used skills were outside his or her area of greatest natural preference or giftedness." (1 – "Falsifying Type") Being able to identify falsification is extremely helpful in working with clients to address career and life balance issues. While other instruments may give an accurate picture of how a person is currently functioning with regard to developed competencies, the BTSA can also identify whether or not these competencies are consistent with natural preferences, allowing for a much more accurate assessment of "true type." This is critical since Benziger's work suggests that over half the population may be falsifying type at work, at home or both. (2 – page 8) According to Benziger, "The US educational system is geared towards the adoption of a falsified thinking type and our workplaces perpetuate the process." (3 – page 3)

### **The Four Modes of Thinking**

<b>Frontal Left</b>	<b>Frontal Right</b>
Structural Analysis	Internal Imaging
Logical Reasoning	Imagination
Mathematical	Expressiveness
<b>Basal Left</b>	<b>Basal Right</b>
Order and Habit	Spiritual Experiences
Ordered Procedures	Rhythm and Feeling
Sequential Routines	Emotional Memories

Benziger identifies four primary modes of thinking in her book *Thriving in Mind* (4 – pages 8-14). She connects these modes directly with Carl Jung's functions or types in her article on sustaining balance (2 – page 1). The following brief descriptions capture the essence of these different modes or thinking styles

The recommendation was that for any company already using the 7 Habits program, the program could be made much more effective in a sustainable manner, if the 7 Habits program were

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supported by the BTSA to insure that all the people who took the 7 Habits program had accurate self-knowledge.

### **BASAL LEFT (BL)**

Basal Left thinking is ordered and procedural, distinguished by the ability to repeat an action consistently and accurately over time. True Basal Left thinkers derive satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment from following established routines and procedures. They are masters at attending to the details. Loyal, dependable and reliable, they may remain with the same company for years, where they are valued for the consistency of their work and the thoroughness with which they complete tasks. Naturally conservative, they appreciate traditional values and prefer to approach tasks and solve problems in a step-by-step manner. (4 – page 18)

This mode corresponds with Jung's Sensing function and excels at sequencing and performing routines.

### **BASAL RIGHT (BR)**

Basal Right thinking is spiritual, symbolic and feeling-based. It picks up the subtleties and shifts in others' moods, emotions and nonverbal signals. Strong Basal Right thinkers are often highly expressive, instinctively reaching out to comfort, encourage or connect with others through words and gestures. Naturally caring, they believe that how a person feels is of utmost importance and they bring this concern for compassion, relationship and interpersonal harmony to both their personal and professional lives. Given their ability to relate positively and empathetically, Basal Right thinkers also excel at motivating others to join in by sharing their own excitement, enthusiasm and support. (4 – page 19)

This mode corresponds to Jung's Feeling function and excels at harmonizing and connecting, skills critical to building rapport, establishing trust and empathetic listening.

### **FRONTAL RIGHT (FR)**

Frontal Right thinking is visual, spatial and nonverbal. It is metaphoric and conceptual, expressing itself as internal pictures or movies which the Frontal Right thinker delights in viewing and which naturally makes them masters of integration, innovation and imagination. Easily bored with routine situations or tasks, they constantly seek the stimulation of new concepts, new information and new adventures. Their visual filing system, which stores material in stacks or piles around their home/office, and their quirky, off the wall sense of humor, identifies them. As conceptual humanitarians they are interested in humanity and its evolution and development. (4 – page 20)

This mode corresponds to Jung's Intuition function and excels at pattern analysis and inventing.

### **FRONTAL LEFT (FL)**

Frontal Left Thinking is logical and mathematical, excelling at critical analysis, diagnostic problem solving and the use of tools and machines. Frontal Left thinkers have well defined goals and the ability to calculate the most direct, efficient and cost-effective strategies for any situation. This leads them towards positions of leadership in which they can control key decisions and

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manipulate circumstances into alignment with their desired results. Given their ability to be critical and precise, it is not surprising that they prefer technical, mechanical, or financial work. (4 – page 21)

This mode corresponds with Jung's Thinking function and excels at logical analysis and decision-making.

### **OTHER FACTORS**

According to Benziger, each of us has an in-born, neurologically based preference for one of these four modes of thinking. Although we can all develop competencies in any of the four modes, it will be easiest and most energy efficient to develop competencies in our preferred mode. It will be next easiest to develop competencies in the auxiliary modes adjacent to our preference. The most difficult area of expansion (our natural weakness), and one that usually comes late in life if at all, is the area diagonally opposite our natural preference.

The other key factor (of equal importance) is the level of introversion and extraversion. This determines the context in which a person is most effective. This means, for instance, that a highly extraverted Frontal Right will succeed in situations which a highly introverted Frontal Right would find most uncomfortable and vice versa. Significantly, approximately 70% of the population enjoys a balanced level of extraversion/introversion and thrives in moderately stimulating situations. Others, who make up 15% of the population, require highly stimulating environments, such as working in an emergency room, while still others who make up 15% of the population need low levels of stimulation, such as a research lab, to be comfortable and function effectively. (4 – pages 80-87) Understanding both the preferred thinking mode and where a client falls on the extraversion/introversion continuum is critical to working effectively with any client.

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIVIDUALS**

In my organization/employee development role with a major corporation, I found that nearly every person seeking career advice had adapted away from their natural preference to a greater or lesser extent. Now, as an independent coach and consultant, I find that many of my clients are extraverted right-brained women (usually Frontal Right) who have overdeveloped their left-brained competencies in order to succeed in the business world. This phenomenon, of course, can also apply to men. The good news is that Frontal Rights are the most adaptable profiles and therefore many of these women became quite successful, attaining high-level positions and salaries. The bad news is that each of them suffered a certain discomfort, ranging from vague feelings of dissatisfaction, usually in younger clients, to extreme cases of near total burnout in older clients who had been falsifying longer. Once they completed the BTSA and could see how they were adapting away from their in-born strengths, they could take the natural next step: explore ways to bring their lives and careers back into balance. In fact, being able to understand the reason for discomfort provides an immediate source of enormous relief.

Other major benefits flow from a clear understanding of one's natural strengths and weaknesses. It becomes clear which tasks should be embraced or avoided, which assignments will be most appropriate for growth and development, and which people will be easiest or most challenging to work with. Armed with this knowledge, clients can make more informed and appropriate choices in all areas of their lives.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONS**

There are many ways to use the BTSA to enhance organizational effectiveness. To improve the hiring process, an organization that has clearly defined job descriptions and relates job requirements to competencies required to be successful in those jobs can use the BTSA to determine how well candidates match these requirements. This same matching of people to required tasks is also an effective way to assemble high performance teams. For developmental assignments, a BTSA profile can be used to determine the next natural area for competency development so that employees can be consciously rotated to assignments requiring use/development of that competency. As previously discussed under Implications for Clients, using the BTSA as a career-counseling tool has numerous benefits that accrue to both the individual and the organization. An area with significant implications for the bottom line is the potential impact on employee well being. Benziger shows us that "falsification of type has significant, negative mental and emotional costs or ramifications." (5 – p. 31) Regardless of the lack of in-depth longitudinal studies in this area, it makes sense to me that an employee performing a job they enjoy and are well suited for will be more highly motivated and productive. Well matched to their job, they would also have less stress, and therefore less disease, with significantly less need to utilize healthcare benefits, a major area of expense for many organizations.

## **FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING A COACH**

Most coaches appear to have right-brained preference, Basal Right or Frontal Right. Although I know of no specific research on the subject, I believe business coaches are more likely to have Frontal Right leads, while life coaches are more likely to have Basal Right leads. Either lead can be effective depending on the client and the nature of the work involved.

First, it is important to determine how a coach will be utilized to benefit a client. If the client has been "falsifying type" and will use the coaching relationship to re-identify with and explore his/her natural lead and preferences, it may be important for a coach to reflect that same lead. For example, it would be easiest for a Frontal Right coach to model, mirror and reinforce Frontal Right thinking and behavior. There are situations where mirroring type has been shown to accelerate progress in a therapist/patient relationship (6 – page 10) and it makes sense that this would apply in a coach/client relationship as well.

If the client is seeking to develop new competencies or gain an appreciation of other ways of looking at the world, it may be important for a coach to possess highly developed competencies in the area(s) where the client seeks development.

Specific types of clients often relate better to coaches with different leads. For instance, lawyers, doctors or chief financial officers (many of whom have a Frontal Left lead) often have difficulty communicating with a coach who has a Basal Right Lead, which is the Frontal Left client's greatest weakness. The Frontal Left client often finds it easier to work with a Frontal Right coach, who like the client has a Frontal lead and an ability to expand to the Frontal Left, albeit not a Frontal Left preference. In contrast, bookkeepers (many of whom have a Basal Left lead) often have difficulty communicating with a coach who has a Frontal right lead, which is the Basal Left client's greatest weakness. The Basal Left client often finds it easier to work with a Basal Right coach, who like the client has a Basal lead and an ability to expand to the Basal Left, albeit not a

Basal Left preference.

It should also be noted that, just as it is detrimental for a client to consistently “falsify type,” it is stressful for a coach to operate outside his/her natural areas of preference and developed competencies for long periods of time. It will be easier and more energy efficient for a coach to use natural preferences and highly developed auxiliary competencies when coaching. Benziger references Csikszentmihalyi’s observations on flow in this regard (6 – page 12) and reminds us, “the use of one’s true Type tends to predictably evoke the experience of inner joy” (7 – page 9).

Another consideration is that the more areas of highly developed competency a coach has, the more versatile that coach is likely to be, relating effectively to a broader range of clients. Thus coaches who are leading with their natural preference and have three or four highly developed modes will tend to be more effective than coaches leading with their natural preference who have only one or two highly developed modes. However, according to both Jung and Benziger, such broader development only occurs naturally in mid-life (3 – page 23). Not surprisingly, quadruple or whole-brained BTSA profiles, although they would be the most versatile, are quite unusual (5% of the population) with triple BTSA profiles comprising 15% of the population. The most frequent pattern (55% of the population) is double and approximately 25% of the population has only one highly developed mode (4 – pages 32-33). Given this information, it would make sense that the most effective coaches tend to be middle-aged and beyond.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The use of accurate type profiling can be a significant aid in aligning organizational resources, determining areas for development, choosing an appropriate coach, and also for being able to coach efficiently and effectively. The Benziger Thinking Styles Assessment (BTSA) is an extremely useful and cost-effective tool for profiling all types of clients and coaches. Additional information on this instrument is available on Benziger’s web site. (1)

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**KBA** *The Human Resource Technology Company*

**Dr. Katherine Benziger**

**PO Box 3673**

**Carbondale, IL 62902, USA**

**001.618.549.2893**

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