Myers-Briggs and Servant-Leadership:
The Servant-Leader and Personality Type

By Ralph Lewis (INFP), Larry C. Spears (ISTJ), and Beth A. Lafferty (INFJ)

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Editor’s Note: This publication is drawn from a series of conversations between Ralph Lewis and Larry C. Spears over a period of several years. The central focus is on the intersecting points between Myers-Briggs and servant-leadership—two separate concepts that, the authors believe, when taken together, can serve to further their mutual development.

Larry C. Spears: You and I have had several lengthy conversations over the years regarding servant-leadership and Myers-Briggs. Given your knowledge and experience as an MBTI (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator) trainer, why don’t we begin with a quick review of the origins of what is now generally referred to as Myers-Briggs, and which grew out of Carl Jung’s writings.

Ralph Lewis: The most important place to start on the Myers-Briggs side is with Carl Jung, and then to place upon that the typology that Isabelle and her mother Katherine Myers-Briggs developed. For me, Jung gives a very simple, coherent framework that is actually about human development. Jung was not interested so much in the classification of people as he is in the creation of a “compass,” a map, to look at the journey that we all have throughout life. For Jung, typology was a starting point—a basic orientation for how we deal with the world. At the core of all of it is the recognition that each person has preferences in viewing the world. It is not so much a given as a starting point to say this is your personal preference for how you deal with all the issues and complexities of the world—how you choose to make meaning of the world. But, I think a very important point to stress here, Larry, is that it’s a journey, and once we understand the beginnings of where these preferences are, Jung is quite clear that whether we like it or not, we need to develop a dynamic within ourselves. In fact, Jung saw this as a source of much creativity.

Katherine and Isabelle Myers then translated Jung’s work into what is called the Myers-Briggs Type Inventory (MBTI), which they started in the 1920s in Florida. Their premise was very much in line with Jung, and with Robert Greenleaf, which was to help people to understand their own unique gifts. In fact, Isabelle’s last work on Briggs typology was called Gifts Differing, which was based on a quotation from St. Paul. She really wanted to emphasize that we all have gifts that we bring into the world, and for her, the most important aspect of the typology was in helping us recognize those gifts in ourselves, but also, recognizing those gifts in other people. That is why I think that Isabelle was a true servant-leader. This was not something that she was doing to classify people; rather, she sought to help people to understand better both themselves and others. She sought to serve others in this way.

Myers-Briggs and Servant-Leadership: The Servant-Leader and Personality Type

Larry: Robert K. Greenleaf’s efforts to serve others are probably best known through his writings on servant-leadership in a number of essays and books in which he sought to develop and share his thinking with others on the meaning of “the servant as leader.” However, before we talk about servant-leadership, I would like to ask you if you could share your thoughts about the Myers-Briggs typologies as the construct relates to the field of leadership broadly. How have you come to
view its potential benefit and usefulness for leaders, and in the area of leadership education?

**Ralph:** Everyone leads in a different way. There are certain things we have to do as leaders: paint a picture, create a vision, wade forward, and communicate that to people. However, we may do it in very different ways. Not only do we do it in different ways, but also we can have different objectives for doing it. If we want people to develop as leaders, we need to recognize that what is right for one person could be horrendous for another person. They simply could not lead in that way. One of the key issues that we find in most organizations is that there is an enormous tendency for leaders to try to develop other people in a clone image. We try to create other leaders in our own image, and for me, the most important identifier of a good leader is whether they allow others to do things differently.

I did some work for a small organization, and the managing director was from a financial background. Very concrete and down-to-earth. Very keen on detail, on budget, on order. Good stuff, because you need that in organizations. However, he hired a marketing director that I never got to meet because he fired him after just three weeks. I said, “Why did you get rid of him?” He said, “Well, he wasn’t doing his job. He was a terrible marketing director.” I said, “What happened?” He said, “Well, you know what he was doing? He was out taking customers to lunch every day. He wasn’t in his office working.” I laughed, I’m afraid, and I said, “But if I had just joined the company as a marketing director, I would want to know what the customers thought of us.” “That’s not proper work,” he said. I tried to get him to understand that the marketing director had been working diligently, but in a very different way, and I failed.

**Larry:** I have seen the same thing occur in the non-profit field over the years, between non-profit boards and their chief executives. While I favor small boards over large boards, one of the particular challenges of a small board that can arise is if it is made up predominantly of a particular Myers-Briggs type and a chief executive from an opposing type. I have observed this occurrence in several organizations over the years, and I have experienced it directly, myself. It can be very difficult.

**Ralph:** Absolutely. In fact, that is a very good example because a lot of work has been done on teams. Now, a board isn’t quite a team, but it is a group of people who have a shared commitment to something. One of the findings is that the very best teams are ones that have the range of types of people with different preferences in them. To take your example, if you have a chief executive of one type and a board of other types, in practice that could be extremely good, providing they all understand and respect the different points of view. If they are going to succeed, they will succeed much better than anyone else will, but, and there is a big “but” here, there is always potential for disaster because of conflict. The other situation is where you have a CEO who has a board having the same Myers-Briggs type and there is no opposition, no discussion; then they are liable to agree very easily and without much debate. On the face of it, you would think that is a good thing. However, there is a real potential for terrible things to happen when there isn’t any conflict.
A very good example of that from U.S. history is the Bay of Pigs invasion. President John F. Kennedy made the decision to invade the Bay of Pigs in Cuba and everyone said, “Yes, Mr. President.” Such a disaster. Afterward he asked, “Why didn't you challenge me?” and they said, “You are the president. We thought it was a stupid idea, but we didn't say so.” Kennedy, to his credit, said: “Every time I bring forth an issue, I want someone in this group to tell me all the reasons why it will not work.” Healthy differences can actually generate the best solutions.

PREFERENCE AND BALANCE

**Larry:** There seems to be some difference of opinion within the Myers-Briggs literature regarding personal preferences and desirable balance. Some suggest that our preferences are also usually our strengths, and that rather than attempting to develop some internal balance (say between our Sensing and Intuitive elements); we really should lead with our strengths and not attempt to develop our inferior, secondary functions. Others suggest that there is an unconscious aspect within most of us that will ultimately seek to assert itself later in life in an effort to create a more balanced and whole person. What say you?

**Ralph:** Whatever your preference, Jung would say, “If you're going to be very good in this one area, you're not going to be good in this opposing area.” However, balance is a lifelong task. We may or may not get there. The key is recognizing this and making certain that you have someone else in your team, or working with you who complements you, and the most important point is to listen to that person. I have worked with many managers who are very task focused and who have very few people skills, but the common ending is to achieve the bottom line. The good ones recognize this and don't try to become the world's best coach, but they make certain that they are complementary. Often their personal assistant serves as their complementary partner.

I can remember one leader who had his p.a. in his office before we went in, and when we went in--she would always ask you in ten minutes early, and would say, “Well, he's been telling me how much he appreciates you and the work you did the other day. He thinks that presentation you gave the other day did this,” or “He's a bit concerned about that,” and people would leave her feeling wonderful, and then he would say, “Well, this needs to happen by this, and this needs to happen by that,” and you'd say, “Yes, that's fine,” and you'd walk out and she'd say, “There you go! You know it's only because he trusts you to do the job.” I don't know if it was deliberate, but it was very clever and effective.

**Larry:** I believe that both Jung's work and Myers-Briggs are to some degree about the implicit search for wholeness. Likewise, Robert Greenleaf’s writings on servant-leadership have a similar goal in mind. To what degree is it possible or desirable for each of us to become more balanced? Alternatively, is our type preference pretty much set within each of us?

**Ralph:** Well, I feel very strongly that in organizations it is much better to have people who balance you because that is better in a practical, everyday sense. In addition, if you have those people and you are open to them, you can develop more yourself. You will actually learn from them. So, on a practical everyday level, have people who are
complementary, with whom you enjoy working and whose abilities and differences you respect. Jung was a mystic, and he talked about the self with a large S, “Self,” and the “ego.” The ego for Jung was the provisional construct. Ego is the way that we use to order the world. The Self, the conscious and the unconscious, contains all the characteristics, all the typologies. It’s just that we have an unconscious tendency to view the world in a certain way. Let’s say you have been brought up as a scientist. You can think analytically quite well, but you may be terrible at writing poetry or counseling people. It isn’t that you can’t write poetry; it’s just that it isn’t your natural tendency. Jung was clear that the journey through life is a journey through wholeness, but there are different stages.

He would say that up to midlife, our responsibility is to help one another by going with our preferences. It is to make the most of our natural tendencies. Therefore, if you have a natural tendency toward analytical thinking, you should use it, rather than attempting to write poetry. That is how you can best serve others. When you have succeeded in the world (and your definition of success will depend on your typology), then midlife kicks in. Moreover, it’s not a matter of chronological age. Some get there earlier, some later. Some never get there. It could be at age 30, 45, 60, etc. that the natural tendency of the psyche to want to balance itself out will occur. Whether we like it or not, Jung says, the unconscious will have its way. I liken it to holding a helium-filled balloon underwater. The natural tendency of a helium-filled balloon is to float upwards, but you have pushed it underwater, and you keep pushing and pushing, attempting to hold it down. Eventually, of course, what is going to happen is that your hands are going to slip and the balloon is going to burst out of the water. The harder you push down, the more forcefully it is going to come up in your face, and Jung states that that has happened to all of us.

Let’s say that you are an extreme judging type—someone who likes everything planned, ordered, settled. Jung would say, “But you have in you, on the unconscious side, an equal capacity to be playful, spontaneous, and to just go with the flow.” That is your balloon under the water. Now, don’t worry about this until midlife when you have used your judging to plan, organize, and get where you want to be. Then you can start letting your spontaneity and playfulness rise gently to the surface. There’s no more need to hold it down as strongly as before.” There is a very interesting book on the shadow side of personality types by Murray Stein. He talks about how, in midlife for example, the more intuitive people, thinking people who tend to deal in ideas and concepts, suddenly develop an interest in tennis or other sports that are more practical and down-to-earth. It’s as if a person says, “I’ve achieved this, so now I’ll take more of an interest in other areas.”

Now, if you, as a strong judging type, are fearful of losing control and you push even harder to keep that balloon of spontaneity underwater, then Jung would say, “Fine, but the balloon is going to come up and hit you sometime.” Jung is saying that which we did not bring to awareness will manifest itself in our lives whether we like it or not. Jungians are very keen on this. I know a man who was working in a job that he did not enjoy. He wanted to be a Jungian analyst, but it was impossible, economically. He had three car accidents in the space of a year; the third time he hit the tire of a bus carrying some senior citizens, and for
him, these were very strong messages from his unconsciousness saying, “Your life is not on the right track. You’re going to keep running into obstacles until you get yourself settled down.” Maybe slightly farfetched, but if you are going to work, feeling miserable and unhappy, Jung would say, “Look at yourself. You are not using your talents;” and Isabelle Myers would say, “You are not directing your talents in the way they should go.” It’s like a river flowing to the sea. Your talents are being blocked; you need to find the right riverbed for them.

Larry: Is it a matter of not using your talents, or is that you have not developed your opposing gifts?

Ralph: It can be either, you see. That’s the complication. This is why anyone who does the Myers-Briggs work needs to spend some time in deep reflection, because we are born with preferences. If I’m brought up in an environment that blocks the use of my preference, I may actually, in an ironic way, develop the opposite first, but life will be hard. Life will be exhausting, because it is as if I am always trying to wade upstream.

Let me give you a very quick example. Someone I knew from the city of Glasgow was brought up in a poor area. There were no books in the house. If she ever read, which she enjoyed doing, she was laughed at. So she got a job in a retail organization, and because she was highly intelligent, eventually she moved to being a personnel manager. When she did the Myers-Briggs at the age of about 25, she came out as a very strong people person Myers-Briggs type. I didn’t believe this because she didn’t have fun using her people skills. There was no spontaneity. There was no joy. She talked about what she should do with people, but it was just going through the motions. Eventually her job was eliminated and she decided to go back, and I think she decided to go to college. She was accepted for her Master’s degree, and she loved it! It was as if she was coming to life for the first time. She did the Myers-Briggs with me a year later and she came out as an intuitive-thinking type, which is the theoretical, conceptual, slightly academic type, and I personally believe that she had found her true calling. Now she is a lecturer at a business school, and she says, “You know, they pay me to do this!”, as if she couldn’t believe it. Most people, if they have reasonable breaks in life, will develop their talents. Unless they blindly follow their parents! You know, you hear of the accountant who says on his deathbed, “I wish I had played the piano, or had been in a rock band,” for example. However, most people do seem to get more or less good use of their talents. It is those people who Jung would say in midlife need to develop their opposites.

Larry: Let’s take the balloon analogy a bit further. What are your thoughts about how that fits into the four sets of types? Are we likely to be hit in the face, or to naturally balance out those extreme divisions within our own personality? In addition, if you are not consciously trying to do that, is the balloon more likely to hit you in the face in different ways?

Ralph: Very good questions! It is a slight heresy to orthodox Myers-Briggs thinking and to a degree the Jungian theory, but I do think that we can develop. If you get people who are in the middle between thinking and feeling, the perceived wisdom is either that they are immature in the sense either that they have not developed fully or that they are mature and
they have developed both thinking and feeling, but they don’t have a particular preference. My rule of thumb normally is that if you have a young person, say 18 or 25, and the test results between thinking and feeling come out equally, I would be slightly suspicious. I would say that they haven’t been faced with enough of life’s challenges to know which road they would go down. But when I meet people with experience that are 40, 50, 60, then I do find that they often have allowed themselves to develop the other side. The key is the expression “allowed themselves,” because I don’t think you consciously need to say, “Today I will develop my other side,” but there will be indications through the years, and you have to listen to yourself and to other people.

If you are a very strong thinking type, analytical type, and someone comes into work and they are in tears, developing your people side, your feeling side, is not going to take an awful lot. It is just going to take the courage to be able to sit down with that person and say, “Tell me. What’s the problem?” and just listen to them. Nevertheless, I have known leaders whom I respect who haven’t been ready and have been terrified of situations like that. I can reverse it the other way equally. You have people who are very, very empathetic, very caring, who find it very difficult to have the courage to say to someone, “Your performance isn’t up to scratch,” which is equally necessary. I think that you have to look beyond the Myers-Briggs score and ask yourself, “Are you sure you’ve developed these areas?” and get some feedback from other people. I do think you can develop those weaker or less comfortable preferences.

If you have an extremely strong preference for one way, it may be more difficult for you to listen to opposites, and the message of your discomfort will be stronger. As long as you listen to it, the balloon will not hit you in the face. If you are repeatedly uncomfortable and you refuse to acknowledge it, then that balloon is going to pop right up and hit you. A friend of mine said it is like the difference between being at home and visiting. We usually prefer home. When we are at home, we kick our shoes off and we relax. We know those preferences and we just enjoy them. However, when we go out and visit, we behave a bit differently. We visit other people or other places to get experience. We go out and we try different things. We try using other functions that are quite different from our natural preferences. It is quite tiring, so we come home and we rest and then we go out again, and gradually, we are expanding our home, or our self, if you may. That concept of visiting, I think, is a lovely concept. “Let me try this. I may not be very good at it, but let me just try to do it in a different way today.”

SERVANT-LEADERSHIP AND MYERS-BRIGGS

Larry: Let’s talk about Myers-Briggs in relation to servant-leadership. To begin, how useful is Myers-Briggs in relation to the themes of leadership and service?

Ralph: The first thing I would say is that at the basis of Katherine and Isabel’s work was the idea of service, although it is not spelled out. Different types have different gifts to offer in service, but that is not explicit in their writings.

There has been an enormous amount of work done in applying typology to styles of prayer and in communicating with God, and various
other religious aspects that may focus on an element of service, but it certainly would not be in the business context. I think the concept of service and typology is critical. There is a tendency to downplay the rational, artistic, and guardian aspects of types in service. But those other aspects are equally important. For example, a timely bus driver or train conductor, a smiling waiter in a restaurant, the chef who has prepared a delicious meal, musicians in an orchestra, a shopkeeper or a bank teller, a plumber and an electrician—each of these people provides an incredibly important service to others. Absolutely vital.

Service comes in all shapes and sizes. You can have practical service, social service, theoretical service, and idealistic service. I think that many people who read Greenleaf are biased in Myers-Briggs types toward the idealist. Therefore, their concept of servant-leadership will also be idealistic—saving the planet, saving humankind, etc. All of these are equally important, and I think that any discussion on type and service really needs to emphasize that every single person, whatever their typology, has the potential to be a fantastic servant-leader according to their gifts.

Larry: That takes me precisely to the main point of my interest: What possibilities are there for further development around Myers-Briggs and servant-leadership? I am focused at the moment on how Myers-Briggs typologies can be an aid to servant-leaders of all types, and I’m also wondering if there ways in which servant-leadership might somehow inform, or add to the knowledge base of the utility of the Myers-Briggs type indicator. What do you see as the potential benefit and uses of MBTI, or even Jungian thought, in the ongoing development of servant-leaders and servant-leadership?

Ralph: I absolutely think that the Myers-Briggs contributes an enormous amount. I think that to direct the Myers-Briggs in terms of servant-leadership and how you use your gifts to fulfill Robert Greenleaf’s Best Test is critical. Ask yourself, “What does this mean to you, and how can you help make certain that this is fulfilled?” The sensing-thinking type is about facts and analysis. They tend to be the very down-to-earth practical people, and they tend to like structure. For them, you see, structure is a service. Their servant-leadership is to set up structures, rules, and regulations. Structure is a gift because it enables other people to be treated fairly because the same rules apply to everyone. You know what the rules are, you have clarity, and you can be efficient in the way you go about doing things. Therefore, if you are efficient, that means that you have more time for yourself. You have a better work/life balance, for example, because the sensing-thinking types are the ones who come up with schedules, limits, and deadlines. Their servant-leadership is demonstrated in using their gifts of organization and practicality to enable others to get a job done efficiently and well. Of course, society is better off for it. Servant-leadership gives each type a positive way to apply the gifts each one has to offer.

Larry: Could you give a corollary thought and an example then to the intuitive-feeling?

Ralph: Yes, and that is my own preference. Intuitive-feeling types, the idealistic types, at the extreme, and I am talking about the extreme, they regard structure as wrong. Everyone should be free to do what he or she wants to do. That is a little bit of an extreme
point of view, but “Why do organizations exist?” I think it can lead to people sometimes disappearing in a cloud of idealism that has no relationship to the practical world. So, where would I see servant-leadership contributing? I think servant-leadership reminds those people, as it has reminded me, that we are united. We are a family in a broader sense of the word and that I can’t just “do my own thing” as an aging hippie. I have to direct those talents of mind in connecting with other people. It is that connection with other people that is the gift that I think servant-leadership brings to the intuitive-feeling type. So, I need to use that intuitive-feeling in helping the sensing-thinking person develop fun and spontaneity, but also recognizing that the sensing-thinking type has given me a sense of structure, which surprisingly enough actually I really do need in certain situations.

Larry: What is your Myers-Briggs type?

Ralph: I am (I)ntroverted-(N)tuitive-(F) eeling-(P)erceiving.

Larry: And I believe you know mine is (I) ntroverted-(S)ensing-(T)hinking-(J)udging.

Ralph: Indeed.

Larry: What about Sensing-Feeling types?

Ralph: Sensing-feeling types tend to be slightly impatient with theory, or they tend to be the great-connectors, and those who appear to care most about others. The challenge of sensing-feeling types is that they can use those gifts for their own purposes. They are highly charming, and that can lead to a lot of manipulation. Again, in servant-leadership terms, when you get sensing-feeling types who are true servant-leaders, they just connect with people. They care about people and they will do just about anything to help people on a practical, everyday basis, and it is wonderful. I like to think of it as love in action, in servant-leadership, in all types of love in action, but this is an obvious one. It is the arm around the shoulder.

Larry: And Intuitive-Thinking types?

Ralph: Intuitive-thinking types are the opposite. They tend to be theoretical. So they would tend to be a bit more uncomfortable in dealing with people on a day-to-day level with warmth. Intuitive-thinking types tend to love dealing with ideas and concepts. The negative side can be that you may get into arguments about how many angels fit on the head of a pin. On the other hand, I am with John Dewey who said, “There is nothing as practical as a good idea.”

I think the great gift that intuitive-thinking types bring to servant-leadership is the idea to provide concepts, visions, and directions, to excite people with just a new idea that can transform their lives. Let me give you one example. In the United Kingdom where I live, local politics used to be about providing services. One of Mrs. Thatcher’s ministers reframed it, looked at it from a different way, and said, “It’s about the role of local politicians, local authorities. It should be about enabling people to have the services that they need.” Now, leaving aside the political things, that’s an enormous shift, and what he was basically saying is, “Let’s help people to develop their own capacity, their own services,” which in my mind is servant-leadership, but going about it in a different way. This is about respect and dignity, enabling you to provide for yourself.
what you need rather than having someone tell you what you need and giving it to you as if you were incapable.

**Larry:** Let’s talk about the introvert and extrovert in relationship to servant-leadership.

**Ralph:** I think it is very important to go back to Jung’s original definition, which is what the Myers-Briggs typology uses as well. The key concepts from Jung are that the extroverts get their energy from the outer world, and they want to see things happen in the outer world. The introverts get their energy from the inner world and the inner world is their home. It really has little to do with whether you are shy or sociable, and ultimately in Jung’s frame, that is a very important distinction to make. What you get from the extrovert is action. They work. Extroverts never sit by and watch things happen. They will want to jump in and maybe they will be involved with people if they are sensing-feeling. They may be involved with actual practical day-to-day stuff if they are sensitive-thinking. Again, it is service in action. It is obvious to see.

**Larry:** Do you then see extroverts as being more prone to action?

**Ralph:** Yes, I do. Immediate action anyway. On the other hand, introverts take things and work on them internally. You will not see immediate action. What you will get, ultimately, is something that is, if they are a thinking type, very clearly thought through, so they have done the work inside themselves and you get this tremendous clarity of thought, which is a service. Anything along the lines of what we can do in this world to help people think more clearly and deeply, I think is a great gift; a great gift. This is why, I think, in France, they teach philosophy in school—because they want people to think for themselves. In fact, I saw some extremely good work in the States where they were teaching philosophy in an inner school in New York City. These kids were being forced to think about things, and their views were being respected when they argued, and because their views were being respected, they started respecting the teacher and it was a virtual cycle. It was an amazing work.

The introverted-feeling type will have an enormous capacity to care about people. Now that is not so easy to observe. Nevertheless, many of the great, well, and not-so-great, religious leaders have introverted feeling as one of their key functions. Their gift is to stand as the touchstones of morality and ethics. You may or may not agree with them. That doesn’t matter, but they have such strong belief systems that I think what they do is provide an anchor, or to use another metaphor, a beacon. So when I work with people who are like this, I end up having enormous respect for their ethical and moral behavior. Even if I disagree with their ideas or their views, I think that service is to be an incredibly good role model to us. They will not do things that are outside their morality.

**Larry:** What are your thoughts on the differences between judging and perceiving?

**Ralph:** The great capacity that people with judging have is the capacity to plan, to organize, to structure, to get closure and completion on projects. The great gift in a servant-leadership capacity is that this capacity can be used wonderfully to help other people organize themselves, to develop growth and actually achieve a goal. I think that is fundamental. Nothing helps people so much as the feeling that they are helping to actually accomplish
something. The person with the judging preference will push people, and that is actually a very positive function of the judging servant-leader. Sometimes they need to push people to accomplish what they are capable of doing and to take them through some of the obstacles that are in everybody's path, such as fear, etc.

The contrasting perceiving function is about spontaneity. It is about living in the moment. It's about fun and playfulness, not that judging types can't have fun, but it's also the capacity to be very flexible, to go off the message, quick wit, and playfulness. What you get from perceiving servant-leaders is very much the capacity to be with other people in the now—to be with them in a fully connected sense.

ANY TYPE CAN BE A SERVANT-LEADER

Larry: When you look at the issue of servant-leadership in relationship to the four pairings, are they roughly equal? That is to say, do you believe that any of those particular pairs have more relevance to being a servant-leader?

Ralph: Absolutely not. I think it's fair to say that you need different leaders for different situations. For example, in times of extreme growth or change, you may want a servant-leader who is conceptual, more of a visionary. Having said that, in times of extreme growth, you need all the types, actually. You absolutely need all the types in whatever situation, and that would be my categorical view. You see what happens is, if you think about leadership, what do we need to look at? We need a vision of where we are going to go. We need to be in touch with practical reality. We need to get stuff done. We need to look after our people on a day-to-day basis, but we also need some idealism, some inspiration, and the four core types represent those four aspects.

If you have too much inspiration from the intuitive-feeling type, there is no grounding in reality from the sensing-thinking and you are not likely to accomplish all that much. You can also have the most wonderful day-to-day practical understanding from the sensing-thinking type, but unless you have some vision you're not going to change and develop, and if you don't have people looking after everyday needs of people, then people are not going to be treated as people, as individuals, in their own rights, which the sensing-feeling types do beautifully. Sensing-feeling types remember to send the flowers when someone is ill, or remember to ask about a sick family member.

I'd like to put in a digression here, Larry. “Human resources,” which is not a term I'm really in favor of, but it used to be that personnel departments were very much run by sensing-feeling types and they looked after people. What has happened with human resources is that you have the other types coming in, and more focus on tasks and on corporate objectives, and less and less on the human dimension. I think there is no one looking after that “human” part of human resources in many organizations today. When you look at the best companies to work for in the States, and we have talked about the TDIndustries and Synovus and other organizations, then you see servant-leadership in all these aspects, and they have that vital component of the people connection. In fact, I remember reading about Southwest Airlines in the Harvard Business Review, and it said what differentiates Southwest Airlines from all the other airlines is that they invest in relationships.
Larry: I believe that an essential connecting point between servant-leadership and Myers-Briggs work has to do with the notion that everyone should be accepted for who they are, and that all too often in the role of supervisors we make the mistake of trying to change others into our own image. I have had some direct experience with this over the years, both as the recipient of mostly well-meaning supervisors and in my own well-meaning advice to staff. In recent years, I am no longer comfortable with the thought of my encouraging others to change, and this growing awareness has heightened my own sensitivity to those instances where others seek to change who I am. In fact, I am increasingly of the opinion that we are not only doing a disservice to others by not accepting them for exactly who they are now, but that we may even be doing harm to others, and to ourselves, through such practices. I believe that what passes today for standard management practices may someday be viewed as a kind of misuse of power toward others.

Ralph: I absolutely agree with that, Larry! I am not sure if Isabelle Myers said exactly those words, but she certainly would have approved totally, because that was the whole crux of her development. Jung was well known for just accepting people as they were. He had many faults, but one of his greatest strengths as a therapist was that he accepted people as they were. Paradoxically, once you accept people for who they are, they are then free to change.

I think that it would be exciting to do some work to help, whatever a person’s type, to help them understand how they can use those gifts in the service of others in servant-leadership terms. I think that part of that is using positive affirming language so that you can help people to see how those gifts can be a blessing to other people. I take the example of the introverted sensing-thinking judging type and help them see how their ability to organize, to plan, to control, to work on details can be tremendously helpful to other people in terms of trust, reliability, and confidence in the fact that these people are getting things right and we can trust them to get things right in an everyday practical sense, whether it’s accounting or engineering or cooking, or whatever. I think that is a tremendous area to be explored.

Ralph: I think it would be of enormous use, Larry. I really do. I think it would be an extremely important piece of work to do. The core essence about both Myers-Briggs and servant-leadership is about helping people, acknowledging people as they are, and accepting them as they are. Greenleaf’s best test about meeting people’s highest priority needs could be applied in light of each type’s gifts and preferences: “Are people healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?” Let me explain this.

Larry: That’s right. It is a paradox. I think that we are near the center of what is for me an inquiry into how servant-leadership and Myers-Briggs and Jung’s ideas can most usefully be connected. I am wondering if there is something here for servant-leaders that might be explored over time as a developmental tool, or as a piece of writing that would address the 16 types in relation to servant-leadership.

Ralph: I think it would be of enormous use, Larry. I really do. I think it would be an extremely important piece of work to do. The core essence about both Myers-Briggs and servant-leadership is about helping people, acknowledging people as they are, and accepting them as they are. Greenleaf’s best test about meeting people’s highest priority needs could be applied in light of each type’s gifts and preferences: “Are people healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?” Let me explain this.

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I think there is also a second part that is about serving people's highest priority needs. Well, my highest priority need, as someone who has an intuitive-feeling preference, will not be the same as yours, the sensing-thinking-judging preference. I need to be able to understand how, as a servant-leader, I could help meet other people's highest priority needs. Because, the worst thing I could do is say, “Well, my needs are for….” Let me give you a different example. Let us say I give you a book of poetry—metaphysical poetry even! That's even better! You look at this and say, as has been said to me, “What planet is he on?” It does not appear that I am serving your highest priority need in the slightest. Now, there is a tension here. It is very clever of Robert Greenleaf and he is very mischievous, because the question becomes, what is the highest priority need? Perhaps what you need, let us say, is practical help. There is a slight tension in that I do need to help you that way, but I may need to help you expand your viewpoint just slightly. I come to your home bearing gifts, but I actually help you and encourage you to go out for a visit to somewhere else.

The more I read Greenleaf, the more I come to realize the total complexity of the challenge that he is sending us. I think Jung used a lot more obscure and mystical language, but ultimately, at the core, I think that there is a degree of overlap between Jung and Greenleaf. It is a lifelong challenge to serve other people, to serve ourselves, to develop, and to grow. The richness and the complexity of that are enormous, and I have to admit that it scares me.

As an intuitive-feeling-perceiving type, I just see so many possibilities, and my tendency would be to pull back because I have a feeling that I cannot possibly go into this…it is too much. Larry, as a servant-leader and as an ISTJ type, where you will help me enormously is in saying, “Look, let’s do some organizing. Let’s do some structuring and let’s think of putting some framework around it and containing it and working on it.” Because of your introversion, I know that it will be an in-depth framework. The idea of this interview is actually a lovely example of the gifts that each of us can bring to complement each other beautifully. Otherwise, I would not go a step further.

Larry: Do you have any thoughts on how the characteristics of servant-leadership might interact with the sixteen types, or vice versa?

Ralph: Let’s take listening and empathy. There is a lot of evidence, and I think that you can link it, but people with a preference for feeling tend to be more empathetic than people with a preference for thinking. Feeling people are much more interested in the subjective world of others than thinking people. Thinking people tend to be more interested in objective reality. Thinking people would be more interested in other people's ideas or views about facts. So, they would say, “What do you think about the election?” Feeling people would be more likely to say, “Well, that's happened. What are your feelings about it? How is it affecting you personally?” Feeling people tend to bring it down to the personal. Thinking people tend to the more objective.

There’s a very good and easy dimension of justice and mercy. Thinking people tend to prefer justice because there has been a crime committed. There’s a penalty and it’s only fair that anyone who has committed that crime
gets the same penalty, the same punishment. Feeling people will go, “Yeah, but we have to look at the subjective side. Why did he do that?” so they tend to go more toward mercy. They are much more interested in exploring generally the inner motivations of other people.

I remember being incredibly impressed with Synovus’s decision-making preferences. What does Synovus do? They start with the people in the decision-making. There is an enormous potential there, even on such things as, “How do we want an organization to be run?” Many people and organizations are constantly doing restructuring in their organizations. Here is a critical point. One of the findings from a long research project done in the U.K. is that organizations are the way they are because of the personalities of the leaders. There is a direct correlation with Myers-Briggs. Sensing-thinking types like clear structure. Why? Because they are efficient. Intuitive-thinking types love matrix organizations. It gives them freedom. Sensing-feeling types do not care about structure so much. What they care about is that people are looked after and valued; and intuitive-feeling types don’t like too much structure, but what they love is individual growth and contribution.

SELECTING SERVANT-LEADER TEAMS WITH MBTI IN MIND

Larry: It is interesting to think about what would happen if an organization made a point of having a core team of leaders drawn from each of those four distinctions—to have a leadership team made up of four people, one from each of those categories. You could have a very remarkably well-informed leadership team that would be likely to bring much better perspectives than is normally the case. That may be a silly idea.

Ralph: No! It is not a silly idea! It is a very good idea. What I tend to do with teams and a board is to say that. Not the leader necessarily, but they have to have in their team, all the types to be good, and to use the expression “cover all the bases.”

Larry: How do you go about doing that, and what do you think about whether one should even attempt to find a way of doing that in advance of a hiring decision?

Ralph: You can ask questions and you can pick up information very quickly. When I was a business school lecturer, we had a team of 6-7 people who were all intuitives, and every time we made a hiring decision, we knew, because we talked about it, we knew we wanted a sensing person. And we made about three decisions over four years, and every time, we all said, “Well, it’s pretty obvious that that person has a sensing preference,” and we didn’t hire them. We always hired the people who were the same as us. It was appalling! It is very difficult to break that, but yes, it is very easy to do in ordinary conversation. Are they practical or are they theoretical? Are they task-oriented or are they people-oriented? Are they the organizer, or do they just kind of float around.

Larry: Ralph, thank you for this conversation. I’ve enjoyed it very much.

Ralph: And thank you, Larry, for your interest, and for all you do to encourage the understanding and practice of servant leadership in so many ways.
**Ralph Lewis** is an organizational consultant and a certified Myers-Briggs consultant in the United Kingdom. He is the co-author of Management Development: Beyond the Fringe (1994). Since 1997, he has served as Board Chair of the Greenleaf Centre-United Kingdom.

**Larry C. Spears** is an author and editor of eleven books, including the acclaimed anthology Insights on Leadership. From 1990 to 2007, he served as President & CEO of The Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership. He now serves as President & CEO of The Spears Center for Servant-Leadership.
The previous conversation was initially published in the 2008 International Journal of Servant-Leadership. Since then, it has generated considerable interest. Near the end of that dialogue, Larry had asked Ralph this question: “I am wondering if there is something here for servant-leaders that might be explored over time as a developmental tool, or as a piece of writing that would address the 16 types in relation to servant-leadership?”

Ralph’s reply, in part, was this: “I think it would be of enormous use, Larry. I think it would be an extremely important piece of work to do. The core essence about both Myers-Briggs and servant-leadership is about helping people, acknowledging people as they are, and accepting them as they are. Greenleaf’s best test about meeting people’s highest priority needs could be applied in light of each type’s gifts and preferences: “Are people healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?” … I think that it would be exciting to do some work to help, whatever a person’s type, to help them understand how they can use those gifts in the service of others in servant-leadership terms. I think that part of that is using positive affirming language so that you can help people to see how these gifts can be a blessing to other people. I take the example of the introverted sensing-thinking-judging type and help them see how their ability to organize, to plan, to control, to work on details can be tremendously helpful to other people in terms of trust, reliability, and confidence in the fact that these people are getting things right and we can trust them to get things right in an everyday practical sense, whether it’s accounting or engineering or cooking, or whatever. I think that is a tremendous area to be explored. I think there is also a second part that is about serving people’s highest priority needs. Well, my highest priority need, as someone who has an intuitive-feeling preference, will not be the same as yours, the sensing-thinking-judging preference. I need to be able to understand how, as a servant-leader, I could help meet other people’s highest priority needs.”

In 2008, Ralph, Larry, and Beth Lafferty (Larry’s wife and partner) began to explore ideas around an understanding of MBTI and servant-leadership characteristics. This exploration has resulted in this second paper, “Servant-Leadership Characteristics, Personality Type, and the Hierarchy of Functions,” as well as the one page chart at the end of this document titled, “Myers-Briggs Type Servant-Leaders and How They Serve.”

A QUICK PRIMER ON SERVANT-LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS AND MYERS-BRIGGS HIERARCHY OF FUNCTIONS

In 1992 Larry Spears first identified a set of ten characteristics of servant-leadership, based upon a careful reading of Robert K. Greenleaf’s original writings, and which are central to the development of servant-leaders. Over the past twenty years, Larry’s work has involved a deepening understanding of these
characteristics and how they contribute to the meaningful practice of servant-leadership in a variety of ways. These characteristics include:

1. Listening
2. Empathy
3. Healing
4. Awareness
5. Persuasion
6. Conceptualization
7. Foresight
8. Stewardship
9. Commitment to the Growth of People

Each Myers-Briggs personality type has what is called a “hierarchy of functions.” In other words, every one of us has a natural first preference for how we behave in the world. This hierarchy ranks your functions from strongest (1) to weakest (4). Over a lifetime we all grow and change, but your hierarchy of functions, that is, your natural first preference is generally understood to stay the same throughout your life.

There are four functions: iNtuition, Sensing, Feeling, and Thinking. There are two ways to express these functions, either through Extraversion or Introversion. Since there are four functions and two ways to express them, simple math (4 x 2) tells us that there are 8 possible combinations in the “hierarchy of functions.” Each of these 8 combinations is the dominant function (the first natural preference) of two (ex. ESFJ and ENFJ have Extraverted Feeling as their dominant function) of the 16 personality types.

The function (iNtuition, Sensing, Feeling, or Thinking) is expressed as an upper case letter, followed by a lower case e (for extraversion) or i (for introversion). Using our last example above, the dominant function of the personality types ESFJ and ENFJ is expressed as Fe (extraverted feeling).

**BY WAY OF EXAMPLES**

In order to better understand how this works, here is a brief breakdown of our own hierarchies of functions:

Beth Lafferty’s personality type is INFJ: the functions are intuition (N) and feeling (F). Remember that for each personality type, there is one function, and only one dominant function: (Sensing, Intuition, Thinking, or Feeling). Beth is an Introvert. Her dominant function (her first natural preference in her behavior) is Introverted Intuition (shown as Ni). The next function is called the auxiliary function, i.e. your second natural preference. Beth’s auxiliary function is extraverted feeling. It is different from your dominant function, but still found among the same four functions (Sensing, Intuition, Thinking, or Feeling). Our dominant and auxiliary functions are our strongest preferences and are not thought to change over time.

Now here comes the interesting part! The third, (also called tertiary), function is always the opposite of your auxiliary function: Beth’s auxiliary function is extraverted feeling, so her third function is the opposite: introverted thinking. Because it is your third natural preference, it seems to be simply “there” and you use it or don’t according to the situation and to what degree it exists in your personality.
The fourth function (your least natural preference) in your hierarchy of functions is always the opposite of your dominant function (your first natural preference) and the fourth function is always your weakest ability. Your fourth function is sometimes referred to as your “inferior” function and is usually most observable when you are under stress. Beth’s fourth function is extraverted sensing. (Sometimes this may appear not to be the case but that is with the rare individuals who through their upbringing have had to develop their shadow side, their inferior, first.)

Larry Spears’ personality type is ISTJ. Larry is an introvert. His dominant function is introverted sensing (shown as Si). His auxiliary function is extraverted thinking. Larry’s third preference (the tertiary function) will be the opposite of his auxiliary function, which makes it introverted feeling. Fourth preference is the exact opposite of the first preference and so, in Larry’s personality, his inferior function is extraverted intuition.

Ralph Lewis’ personality type is INFP. Ralph is an introvert. Ralph’s dominant function is introverted feeling (shown as Fi). His auxiliary function is extraverted intuition. Turn that around to its opposite, introverted sensing, for Ralph’s third function. Take his dominant function (introverted feeling) and go to its opposite, extraverted sensing to find Ralph’s fourth behavioral preference.

To complicate matters, as if it weren’t already confusing enough, you may more readily notice the auxiliary function in an introvert until you get to know that person a bit. If you think about it, it makes sense. Introverts tend to keep to themselves until they feel comfortable enough to share their personalities. In part, that’s why they’re considered introverts.

**SERVANT-LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS AND DOMINANT FUNCTIONS**

Listed below are the ten characteristics of a servant-leader. Each characteristic is followed by a listing of how the dominant functions of the Personality Types naturally exhibit each characteristic.

Our categorizing of Myers-Briggs personality types and Servant-Leadership characteristics represents our best-thinking on this subject, but it is also completely untested. It is our hope that this may inspire others to find ways to put these theories to the test.

Our starting point has to do with our understanding of each of these ten servant-leadership characteristics, as listed below. We invite you to carefully read these descriptions.

With each characteristic, we have looked at how each Myers-Briggs dominant functions (Sensing, Intuition, Thinking, and Feeling) may exhibit that characteristic. While we think it is possible—even likely—that one could be highly skilled or practiced in any characteristic without it being readily apparent to others, our underlying assumption is that, in most instances, particular servant-leader characteristics are likely to be seen in any servant-leader by others.

Here is the rank order of the four functions:

#1 Dominant Function  
(your first natural preference)
#2 Auxiliary Function
(your second natural preference)

#3 Third Function
(opposite of #2) (you use it or you don’t depending on the situation and to what degree you possess it in your personality)

#4 Fourth Function
(opposite of #1) (usually what people see when you are under pressure and at your worst)

To this end, we have utilized the generally accepted “hierarchy of functions” in MBTI as our yardstick for predicting how each Myers-Briggs types is likely to be seen by others as exhibiting any particular characteristic. Using the hierarchy of functions as our guide, we have taken the first natural preference, i.e. the “dominant function” of each personality type and applied them to each of the ten characteristics. Again, this assumes that people will generally, though not always, be able to see a particular characteristic exhibited (over time) by any servant-leader.

Put another way, each of these servant-leadership characteristics are ascribed to the sixteen personality types based upon what the personality type shows to the world—what a stranger might readily see in an individual servant-leader’s personality. Once you see how a person’s first natural preference exhibits a servant-leader characteristic, you may see servant-leadership in people you never thought of being servant-leaders before. Even yourself! As in all Myers-Briggs work, the primary purpose of this is to help us to understand ourselves, and others, and the way in which we approach the world. In this instance, we are focused on how different Myers-Briggs personalities are likely to see themselves and others exhibiting each servant-leadership characteristic. It is also a chance to further understand that anyone can be a servant-leader. Sometimes you cannot recognize a characteristic of servant-leadership in someone unless you know what it looks like expressed in that person’s personality. This should by no means be seen as anything more than suggestive of what we think is generally likely for each type. Each individual is unique, and every Myers-Briggs type is likely to have many individuals who excel in each characteristic. We don’t claim to know the actual personality types of anyone we have quoted below. The people we’ve chosen to quote may possibly be understood, in general, to be servant-leaders. We believe that there is value in the following understanding, but it certainly does not represent any definitive understanding.

(The web page TypeLogic, http://typelogic.com/ served as inspiration to ascribe specific Myers-Briggs personality types to the individuals quoted below. The quotes were taken from the web page BrainyQuote, http://brainyquote.com/)
The servant-leader seeks to identify the will of a group and helps to clarify that will. He or she listens receptively to what is being said and unsaid. Listening also encompasses hearing one’s own inner voice. Listening, coupled with periods of reflection, is essential to the growth and well-being of the servant-leader.

**SERVANT-LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS AND PERSONALITY TYPES**

1. **Listening:** Leaders have traditionally been valued for their communication and decision-making skills. Although these are also important skills for the servant-leader, they need to be reinforced by a deep commitment to listening intently to others. The servant-leader seeks to identify the will of a group and helps to clarify that will. He or she listens receptively to what is being said and unsaid. Listening also encompasses hearing one’s own inner voice. Listening, coupled with periods of reflection, is essential to the growth and well-being of the servant-leader.

**How the Eight Dominant Functions Display Listening:**

- **Extraverted Intuition (Ne) ENFP and ENTP:** enthusiastic and warm, hearing possibilities

  Example: 60 Minutes commentator Andy Rooney—“We’re all proud of making little mistakes. It gives us the feeling we don’t make any big ones.”

  Introverted Intuition (Ni) INFJ and INTJ: quiet and committed, analyzing what is heard

  Example: Theologian Paul Tillich—“The first duty of love is to listen.”

- **Extraverted Sensing (Se) ESFP and ESTP:** energetic and accepting, immediate response

  Example: Feminist and politician Bella Abzug—“The test for whether or not you can hold a job should not be the arrangement of your chromosomes.”

  Introverted Sensing (Si) ISFJ and ISTJ: cautious and deliberate, gathering facts

  Example: Author of the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson—“It is error alone which needs the support of government. Truth can stand by itself.”

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**THE HIERARCHY OF FUNCTIONS**

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*This chart is copyrighted by Joe Butt [http://typelogic.com/](http://typelogic.com/) and is reprinted with permission.*
Extroverted Feeling (Fe) ESFJ and ENFJ: loyal and tuned in, seeking to harmonize
Example: the politician at a town hall meeting, Elizabeth Dole—“There is no doubt that now, more than ever, we must work to end our dependence on foreign oil sources. But we cannot do so by ignoring the wishes of the coastal communities that oppose drilling.”

Introverted Feeling (Fi) ISFP and INFP: kind and sensitive, nurturing the spirit
Example: Fred Rogers, creator of “Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood”—“Knowing that we can be loved exactly as we are gives us all the best opportunity for growing into the healthiest of people.”

Extraverted Thinking (Te) ESTJ and ENTJ: focused and ready, actively solving
Example: Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan—“If you want to make peace, you don’t talk to your friends. You talk to your enemies.”

Introverted Thinking (Ti) ISTP and INTP: logical and observant, getting to the point
Example: Socrates—“the unexamined life is not worth living.”

2. Empathy: The servant-leader strives to understand and empathize with others. People need to be accepted and recognized for their special and unique spirits. One assumes the good intentions of co-workers and colleagues and does not reject them as people, even when one may be forced to refuse to accept certain behaviors or performance. The most successful servant-leaders are those who have become skilled empathetic listeners.

How the Eight Dominant Functions Display Empathy:

Extraverted Intuition (Ne) ENFP and ENTP: alert and flexible, relating to the individual, putting words to feeling
Example: American author Samuel L. Clemens (Mark Twain)—“Don’t let schooling interfere with your education.”

Introverted Intuition (Ni) INFJ and INTJ: focused on the person, seeing the unseen perspective
Example: Saint Augustine—“Patience is the companion of wisdom.”

Extroverted Sensing (Se) ESFP and ESTP: genuinely affectionate and in the moment
Example: Designer Coco Chanel—“There are people who have money and people who are rich.”

Introverted Sensing (Si) ISFJ and ISTJ: calm and pragmatic, tuned to the specifics
Example: Florence Nightingale—“I think one’s feelings waste themselves in words; they ought all to be distilled into actions which bring results.”

Extraverted Feeling (Fe) ESFJ and ENFJ: embracing you with warmth and acceptance
Example: Jack Benny—“My wife Mary and I have been married for forty-seven years and not once have we had an argument serious enough to consider divorce; murder, yes, but divorce, never.”

Introverted Feeling (Fi) ISFP and INFP: caring and concerned, quietly intense
Example: the Stage Manager in Thornton Wilder’s “Our Town”—“We all know that something is eternal. And it ain’t houses and it ain’t names, and it ain’t earth, and it ain’t even the stars . . . everybody knows in their bones
that something is eternal, and that something has to do with human beings. All the greatest people ever lived have been telling us that for five thousand years and yet you'd be surprised how people are always losing hold of it. There's something way down deep that's eternal about every human being.”

**Extraverted Thinking (Te) ESTJ and ENTJ:** energetic effort aimed at solving the problem
Example: Journalist David Brinkley—“A successful man is one who can lay a firm foundation with the bricks others have thrown at him.”

**Introverted Thinking (Ti) ISTP and INTP:** analytical and objective, clearly sees the problem
Example: Carl Jung—“Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves.”

3. **Healing:** The healing of relationships is a powerful force for transformation and integration. One of the great strengths of servant-leadership is the potential for healing one's self and one's relationship to others. Many people have broken spirits and have suffered from a variety of emotional hurts. Although this is a part of being human, servant-leaders recognize that they have an opportunity to help make whole those with whom they come in contact. In his essay, *The Servant as Leader*, Greenleaf writes, “There is something subtle communicated to one who is being served and led if, implicit in the compact between servant-leader and led, is the understanding that the search for wholeness is something they share.”

**How the Eight Dominant Functions Display Healing:**

**Extraverted Intuition (Ne) ENFP and ENTP:** looking for win-win; builds on understanding
Example: Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi—“Forgiveness is a virtue of the brave.”

**Introverted Intuition (Ni) INFJ and INTJ:** embracing everyone's unique value; finding unique solutions
Example: Nelson Mandela—“If there are dreams about a beautiful South Africa, there are also roads that lead to their goal. Two of these roads could be named Goodness and Forgiveness.”

**Extroverted Sensing (Se) ESFP and ESTP:** let's make this fun
Example: Tour de France Champion Lance Armstrong—“Through my illness I learned rejection. I was written off. That was the moment I thought, Okay, game on. No prisoners. Everybody's going down.”

**Introverted Sensing (Si) ISFJ and ISTJ:** working one step at a time, for as long as it takes
Example: Teresa of Avila—“God gave us faculties for our use; each of them will receive its proper reward. Then do not let us try to charm them to sleep, but permit them to do their work until divinely called to something higher.”

**Extroverted Feeling (Fe) ESFJ and ENFJ:** attending to morale, shoring up the spirit
Example: Network News Anchor Diane Sawyer—“Whatever you want in life, other people are going to want it too. Believe in yourself enough to accept the idea that you have an equal right to it.”

**Introverted Feeling (Fi) ISFP and INFP:** nurturing the soul
Example: Princess Diana—“I think the biggest disease the world suffers from in this day and age is the disease of people feeling unloved. I know that I can give love for a minute, for half an hour, for a day, for a month, but I can give. I am very happy to do that, I want to do that.”

*Extraverted Thinking (Te) ESTJ and ENTJ: enthusiastically doing*
Example: Founder of the American Red Cross Clara Barton—“I may be compelled to face danger, but never fear it, and while our soldiers can stand and fight, I can stand and feed and nurse them.”

*Introverted Thinking (Ti) ISTP and INTP: reflecting on how to better the system*
Example: General Omar N. Bradley—“Wars can be prevented just as surely as they can be provoked, and we who fail to prevent them, must share the guilt for the dead.”

4. **Awareness:** General awareness, and especially self-awareness, strengthens the servant-leader. Awareness helps one in understanding issues involving ethics, power and values. It lends itself to being able to view most situations from a more integrated, holistic position. As Greenleaf observed: “Awareness is not a giver of solace—it is just the opposite. It is a disturber and an awakener. Able leaders are usually sharply awake and reasonably disturbed. They are not seekers after solace. They have their own inner serenity.”

**How the Eight Dominant Functions Display Awareness:**

*Extraverted Intuition (Ne) ENFP and ENTP: perceiving motives, connecting the dots, finding a new answer*
Example: Albert Einstein—“It’s not that I’m so smart, it’s just that I stay with problems longer.”

*Introverted Intuition (Ni) INFJ and INTJ: imagining a better world; working to make it happen*
Example: Susan B. Anthony fighting for women’s rights—“Men’s rights no more; women’s rights no less”

*Extraverted Sensing (Se) ESFP and ESTP: what is being experienced in the here and now*
Example: Chuck Yeager, first pilot to break the sound barrier—“I was always afraid of dying. Always. It was my fear that made me learn everything I could about my airplane and my emergency equipment, and kept me flying respectful of my machine and always alert in the cockpit.”

*Introverted Sensing (Si) ISFJ and ISTJ: what is specifically going on in the here and now*
Example: Johnny Carson—“Talent alone won’t make you a success. Neither will being in the right place at the right time, unless you are ready. The most important question is, ‘Are you ready?’”

*Extraverted Feeling (Fe) ESFJ and ENFJ: making sure we’re all on the same page*
Example: Indianapolis Colts quarterback Peyton Manning—“You hear about how many fourth quarter comebacks that a guy has and I think it means a guy screwed up in the first three quarters.”

*Introverted Feeling (Fi) ISFP and INFP: examining what really matters to them*
Example: John Lennon—“You’re just left with yourself all the time; whatever you do anyway,
you’ve got to get down to your own God in your own temple. It’s all down to you, mate.”

Extraverted Thinking (Te) ESTJ and ENTJ: take charge attitude
Example: George Bernard Shaw—“A life spent making mistakes is not only more honorable, but more useful than a life spent doing nothing.”

Introverted Thinking (Ti) ISTP and INTP: impartially seeing the key factors
Example: Capt. Chesley “Sully” Sullenberger on having to land his plane in the Hudson River—“Losing thrust on both engines, at a low speed, at a low altitude, over one of the most densely populated areas on the planet. Yes, I knew it was a very challenging situation.”

5. Persuasion: Another characteristic of servant-leaders is reliance on persuasion, rather than on one’s positional authority, in making decisions within an organization. The servant-leader seeks to convince others, rather than coerce compliance. This particular element offers one of the clearest distinctions between the traditional authoritarian model and that of servant-leadership. The servant-leader is effective at building consensus within groups. This emphasis on persuasion over coercion finds its roots in the beliefs of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) - the denominational body to which Robert Greenleaf belonged.

How the Eight Dominant Functions Display Persuasion:

Extraverted Intuition (Ne) ENFP and ENTP: seek first to understand, then act; this is the only life you have: live it!

Example: Theodor Geisel (Dr. Seuss)—“Be who you are and say what you feel, because those who mind don’t matter and those who matter don’t mind.”

Introverted Intuition (Ni) INFJ and INTJ: inspiring you to believe what he envisions
Example: Tom Joad in John Steinbeck’s The Grapes of Wrath—“Wherever they’s a fight so hungry people can eat, I’ll be there. Wherever they’s a cop beatin’ up a guy, I’ll be there. If Casy knowed, why, I’ll be in the way guys yell when they’re mad an’—I’ll be in the way kids laugh when they’re hungry n’ they know supper’s ready. An’ when our folks eat the stuff they raise an’ live in the houses they build—why, I’ll be there. See? God, I’m talkin’ like Casy. Comes of thinkin’ about him so much. Seems like I can see him sometimes.”

Extraverted Sensing (Se) ESFP and ESTP: Carpe Diem! Seize the day!
Example: Dale Evans—“Who cares about the clouds when we’re together? Just sing a song and bring the sunny weather.”

Introverted Sensing (Si) ISFJ and ISTJ: this is what we have; this is what we need
Example: Journalist Edward R. Murrow—“To be persuasive we must be believable; to be believable we must be credible; credible we must be truthful.”

Extraverted Feeling (Fe) ESFJ and ENFJ: we’re a team and we’re all in this together
Example: NFL Coach Vince Lombardi—“individual commitment to a group effort—that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work.”
6. Conceptualization: Servant-leaders seek to nurture their abilities to dream great dreams. The ability to look at a problem or an organization from a conceptualizing perspective means that one must think beyond day-to-day realities. For many leaders, this is a characteristic that requires discipline and practice. The traditional leader is consumed by the need to achieve short-term operational goals. The leader who wishes to also be a servant-leader must stretch his or her thinking to encompass broader-based conceptual thinking. Within organizations, conceptualization is, by its very nature, a key role of boards of trustees or directors. Unfortunately, boards can sometimes become involved in the day-to-day operations—something that should be discouraged—and, thus, fail to provide the visionary concept for an institution. Trustees need to be mostly conceptual in their orientation, staffs need to be mostly operational in their perspective, and the most effective executive leaders probably need to develop both perspectives within themselves. Servant-leaders are called to seek a delicate balance between conceptual thinking and a day-to-day operational approach.

How the Eight Dominant Functions Display Conceptualization:

Introverted Intuition (Ni) INFJ and INTJ: if it can be imagined, it can be done
Example: Michelle Obama taking on the task of eliminating childhood obesity—“We have everything we need right now; we have the information, we have the ideas, and we have the desire to start solving America’s childhood obesity problem. The only question is whether we have the will.”

Introverted Thinking (Ti) ISTP and INTP: direct, concise reporting of possible results, based on logical analysis
Example: Former President James Madison—“It will be of little avail to the people that the laws are made by men of their own choice if the laws be so voluminous that they cannot be read, or so incoherent that they cannot be understood.”

Extraverted Intuition (Ne) ENFP and ENTP: the next best thing is right around the corner; what if we look at it this way?
Example: Benny Hill—“Just because nobody complains doesn’t mean all parachutes are perfect.”

Extraverted Sensing (Se) ESFP and ESTP: go with the flow to the next sensual experience
Example: Dolly Parton—“When I’m inspired, I get excited because I can’t wait to see what I’ll come up with next.”

Introverted Feeling (Fi) ISFP and INFP: offering you a personal value or opinion
Example: Author O. Henry—“She plucked from my lapel the invisible strand of lint (the universal act of woman to proclaim ownership).”

Introverted Thinking (Te) ESTJ and ENTJ: brimming with confidence
Example: Abolitionist Frederick Douglass—“At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument is needed.”
become reality through magic; it takes sweat, determination and hard work.”

**Extroverted Feeling (Fe) ESFJ and ENFJ:** reaching for the aesthetic ideal
Example: Psychologist Abraham Maslow—“One’s only rival is one’s own potentialities. One’s only failure is failing to live up to one’s own possibilities. In this sense, every man can be a king, and must therefore be treated like a king.”

**Introverted Feeling (Fi) ISFP and INFP:** pondering the possibilities of any given situation
Example: Bob Dylan—“I define nothing. Not beauty, not patriotism. I take each thing as it is, without prior rules about what it should be.”

**Extraverted Thinking (Te) ESTJ and ENTJ:** efficiently analyzing for the long term
Example: Auto maker Henry Ford—“I am looking for a lot of men who have an infinite capacity to not know what can’t be done.”

**Introverted Thinking (Ti) ISTP and INTP:** theorizing models based on events
Example: Copernicus proposing, with mathematical evidence that the earth revolves around the sun, rather than vice-versa—“For it is the duty of an astronomer to compose the history of the celestial motions through careful and expert study.”

7. **Foresight:** Closely related to conceptualization, the ability to foresee the likely outcome of a situation is hard to define, but easier to identify. One knows foresight when one experiences it. Foresight is a characteristic that enables the servant-leader to understand the lessons from the past, the realities of the present, and the likely consequence of a decision for the future. It is also deeply rooted within the intuitive mind. Foresight remains a largely unexplored area in leadership studies, but one most deserving of careful attention.

**How the Eight Dominant Functions Display Foresight:**

**Extraverted Intuition (Ne) ENFP and ENTP:** motivated to understand and evolve
Example: Senator Smith in the movie “Mr. Smith Goes to Washington”—“…there’s no place out there for graft, or greed, or lies, or compromises with human liberties…great principles don’t get lost once they come to light. They’re right here; you just have to see them again!”

**Introverted Intuition (Ni) INFJ and INTJ:** following a certain hunch
Example: the Mad Hatter in Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* who, after Alice insists she can’t take more tea since she hasn’t yet had any declares, “You mean you can’t take less. It’s very easy to take more than nothing.”

**Extraverted Sensing (Se) ESFP and ESTP:** it’s only by letting go that you can move forward
Example: Ernest Hemingway: “Every man’s life ends the same way. It is only the details of how he lived and how he died that distinguish one man from another.”

**Introverted Sensing (Si) ISFJ and ISTJ:** leaving nothing to chance
Example: Author Damon Runyan—“The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, but that’s the way to bet.”
Extraverted Feeling (Fe) ESFJ and ENFJ: nurturing the potential
Example: Oil man and politician Ross Perot—“Punishing honest mistakes stifles creativity. I want people moving and shaking the earth and they’re going to make mistakes.”

Introverted Feeling (Fi) ISFP and INFP: “how have I felt before; how may I feel in the future?”
Example: Folk Singer and Social Activist Pete Seeger—“Do you know the difference between education and experience? Education is when you read the fine print; experience is what you get when you don’t.”

Extraverted Thinking (Te) ESTJ and ENTJ: visualizing a logical solution
Example: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s great detective Sherlock Holmes—“when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth.”

Introverted Thinking (Ti) ISTP and INTP: seeing clarity in complexity
Example: Bertrand Russell—“Fear is the main source of superstition, and one of the main sources of cruelty. To conquer fear is the beginning of wisdom.”

8. Stewardship: Peter Block (author of Stewardship and The Empowered Manager) has defined stewardship as “holding something in trust for another.” Robert Greenleaf’s view of all institutions was one in which CEO’s, staffs, and trustees all played significant roles in holding their institutions in trust for the greater good of society. Servant-leadership, like stewardship, assumes first and foremost a commitment to serving the needs of others. It also emphasizes the use of openness and persuasion, rather than control.

How the Eight Dominant Functions Display Stewardship:

Extraverted Intuition (Ne) ENFP and ENTP: perceptive and open minded; pushing the envelope for a better way
Example: Alexander the Great—“Remember upon the conduct of each depends the fate of all.”

Introverted Intuition (Ni) INFJ and INTJ: voicing the foundation of ideals
Example: Attorney Atticus Finch in Harper Lee’s “To Kill a Mockingbird”—“I’m no idealist to believe firmly in the integrity of our courts and of our jury system - that’s no ideal to me. That is a living, working reality! Now I am confident that you gentlemen will review, without passion, the evidence that you have heard, come to a decision and restore this man to his family. In the name of GOD, do your duty.”

Extraverted Sensing (Se) ESFP and ESTP: loyal to the moment
Example: Horace—“Seize the day, trusting as little as possible in the future.”

Introverted Sensing (Si) ISFJ and ISTJ: conscientious and loyal to tradition
Example: Writer Henry James—“It takes an endless amount of history to make even a little tradition.”

Extraverted Feeling (Fe) ESFJ and ENFJ: harmony as a labor of love
Example: Former President and actor Ronald Reagan—“Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn’t pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same.”
Introverted Feeling (Fi) ISFP and INFP: holding personal values sacred
Example: Poet Jack Kerouac—“I hope it is true that a man can die and yet not only live in others but give them life, and not only life, but that great consciousness of life.”

Extraverted Thinking (Te) ESTJ and ENTJ: serious commitment to the Right Thing
Example: Former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor—“My concern was whether I could do the job of a justice well enough to convince the nation that my appointment was the right move.”

Introverted Thinking (Ti) ISTP and INTP: logical analysis on how to improve the system
Example: John Muir founder of the Sierra Club—“God has cared for these trees, saved them from drought, disease, avalanches, and a thousand tempests and floods. But he cannot save them from fools.”

9. Commitment to the Growth of People:
Servant-leaders believe that people have an intrinsic value beyond their tangible contributions as workers. As such, the servant-leader is deeply committed to the growth of each and every individual within his or her organization. The servant-leader recognizes the tremendous responsibility to do everything in his or her power to nurture the personal and professional growth of employees and colleagues. In practice, this can include (but is not limited to) concrete actions such as making funds available for personal and professional development, taking a personal interest in the ideas and suggestions from everyone, encouraging worker involvement in decision-making, and actively assisting laid-off employees to find other positions.

How the Eight Dominant Functions Display Commitment to the Growth of People:

Extraverted Intuition (Ne) ENFP and ENTP: friendly and affirming
Example: Anne Frank—“How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.”

Introverted Intuition (Ni) INFJ and INTJ: you can be or do anything
Example: British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher—“Disciplining yourself to do what you know is right and important, although difficult, is the highroad to pride, self-esteem, and personal satisfaction.”

Extraverted Sensing (Se) ESFP and ESTP: if it makes you happy, do it!
Example: Richard Branson—“A business has to be involving, it has to be fun, and it has to exercise your creative instincts.”

Introverted Sensing (Si) ISFJ and ISTJ: to the extent that resources permit
Example: Golfer Gary Player—“The harder you work, the luckier you get.”

Extraverted Feeling (Fe) ESFJ and ENFJ: what benefits one benefits us all
Example: Oprah Winfrey—“For every one of us that succeeds, it’s because there’s somebody there to show you the way out.”

Introverted Feeling (Fi) ISFP and INFP: offering positive reassurance and guidance
Example: Mother Julian of Norwich—“All shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.”

Extraverted Thinking (Te) ESTJ and ENTJ: enhancing, encouraging and actualizing growth
Example: First head of the Peace Corps, Sargent Shriver—“Do the job first; worry about the clearance later.”

*Introverted Thinking (Ti) ISTP and INTP: offering logical ideas within a framework*

Example: Former President and General Dwight D. Eisenhower—“In preparing for battle I have always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable.”

**10. Building community:** The servant-leader senses that much has been lost in recent human history as a result of the shift from local communities to large institutions as the primary shaper of human lives. This awareness causes the servant-leader to seek to identify some means for building community among those who work within a given institution. Servant-leadership suggests that true community can be created among those who work in businesses and other institutions. Greenleaf said, “All that is needed to rebuild community as a viable life form for large numbers of people is for enough servant-leaders to show the way, not by mass movements, but by each servant-leader demonstrating his or her unlimited liability for a quite specific community-related group.”

**How the Eight Functions Display Building Community:**

*Extraverted Intuition (Ne) ENFP and ENTP: happily seeing and bringing out, the best in everyone*

Example: World famous French chef Julia Child—“Life is the proper binge!”

*Introverted Intuition (Ni) INFJ and INTJ: each unique one is a part of the unique whole*

Example: Alfred Tennyson—“I am part of all that I have met.”

*Extroverted Sensing (Se) ESFP and ESTP: don’t worry, be happy!*

Example: Mae West—“I never worry about diets. The only carrots that interest me are the number you get in a diamond.”

*Introverted Sensing (Si) ISFJ and ISTJ: everyone working for a common goal*

Example: Chinese Proverb—“One generation plants the trees; another gets the shade.”

*Extroverted Feeling (Fe) ESFJ and ENFJ: we can do this together!*

Example: Basketball great Michael Jordan—“Obstacles don’t have to stop you. If you run into a wall, don’t turn around and give up. Figure out how to climb it, go through it, or work around it.”

*Introverted Feeling (Fi) ISFP and INFP: communing with those who share like values*

Example: Educator Howard Thurman—“there is something in every one of you that waits and listens for the sound of the genuine in yourself. It is the only true guide you will ever have. And if you cannot hear it, you will all of your life spend your days on the ends of strings that somebody else pulls.”

*Extraverted Thinking (Te) ESTJ and ENTJ: keenly interested in learning what others have to offer and communicating it to all*

Example: British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli—“Circumstances are beyond human control, but our conduct is in our own power.”

*Introverted Thinking (Ti) ISTP and INTP: creating conceptual models based on principles*
Example: Former President Gerald R. Ford—“I am acutely aware that you have not elected me as your President by your ballots, so I ask you to confirm me with your prayers.”

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Carl Jung, Katherine Myers-Briggs, Isabelle Myers, Robert Greenleaf—The ideas and writings of these four people are linked together in our minds. Our efforts to follow, to understand, and to extend their trails have been at the heart of these two papers. We are in uncharted territory, but we believe that it may be important—or at least useful— territory.

We have these basic conclusions—

1. Servant-leaders are to be found among every Myers-Briggs type.
2. Different MBTI servant-leaders have differing gifts to offer their teams, organizations, and the world. Understanding this is important work.
3. By better understanding our own gifts as servant-leaders, based upon our Myers-Briggs type, we can make our greatest contributions as servant-leaders.
4. By better understanding others unique gifts as servant-leaders, based upon their Myers-Briggs type, we develop an appreciation for the differences to be found among servant-leaders.
5. All of this is linked to Greenleaf’s “Best Test” of servant-leadership, which he described as being: “Do others become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And what is the effect on the least privileged in society—will they benefit, or at least not be further deprived?”

It is our hope that, in time, others may want to carry this work forward in new and interesting ways.

Beth Lafferty has studied Myers-Briggs literature for many years. She works with the Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis. Beth has previously worked for St. Joseph’s University Bookstore (Philadelphia), and for The Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership (Indianapolis). For ten years she managed an antiques shop in Philadelphia. Married in 1979, Beth Lafferty and Larry Spears have two grown sons.

Ralph Lewis is an organizational consultant and a certified Myers-Briggs consultant in the United Kingdom. He is the co-author of Management Development: Beyond the Fringe (1994). Since 1997, he has served as Board Chair of the Greenleaf Centre-United Kingdom.

Larry C. Spears is an author-editor of a dozen books, including the acclaimed anthology, Insights on Leadership. He is also Senior Advisory Editor for The International Journal of Servant-Leadership. From 1990 to 2007, Larry served as President & CEO of The Greenleaf Center for Servant-Leadership. Since 2008 he has served as President & CEO of The Spears Center for Servant-Leadership. In 2010 Larry was appointed Servant-Leader Scholar at Gonzaga University.
### Myers-Briggs Type Servant-Leader Types and How They Serve: What Is Your Servant-Leader Type?

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<td>Adding adventure, fun and excitement to life and challenging others to take risks and grow. They show others service through challenge.</td>
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<td>Maintaining deeply held personal values and helping others live up to these ideals. They serve by being true idealists.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>