

INTJ

(About 2.1% of the U.S. population)

INTJs are among the most *independent* of the 16 types; their theme song could be “My Way.” They have an inner world rich with endless possibilities. When combined with their Thinking-Judging (TJ) preferences, this gives them the drive to constantly improve everything. They are the *strategists* – the “better idea” people – of the typological world. Everything has room for improvement – words, plans, designs, ideas, even people. In the INTJ’s eyes, even the best can be made better.

INTJ Personality Highlights

INTJs have a natural inclination for organization and they often rise to the top of a system. People naturally look to them for a job well done, a word appropriately spoken, an opportunity seized – and they usually do it with ease.

- Their **Introversion** encourages inward reflection.
- Their **iNtuition** means they tend to be “big picture” people who view the world in terms of endless possibilities.
- Their **Thinking** means they prefer making decisions objectively.
- Their **Judging** creates a lifestyle with structure, schedule, and order.

These four preferences combine to create a type with confidence, stability, competence, intellectual insight, and self-assurance.

Here are some other characteristics. INTJs...

- May have an aura of arrogance that makes in-depth relationships develop slowly.
- Can seem aloof and sometimes argumentative, although this behavior is simply the result of their attempts to improve the world around them.
- May be surprised when others take offense at their attempts to promote improvement.
- Learn by arguing or debating, which is part of their continuing quest to understand the universe; this “friendly discussion” may be seen by others as hostile behavior.

INTJs in Personal Life

For INTJs, any relationship that’s good today can be better tomorrow, and both parties should be working toward constant self-improvement. Relationships are about learning, growing, confronting, and anything else that leads to mutual personal competence. As lovers, mates, and companions, INTJs must always be improving. When their efforts are blocked, they can become critical and depressed over what they feel is stagnation.

INTJs at Home

Home is a reflection of the INTJ's current conceptual interests. Theoretical and practical books, DVDs, tapes, and podcasts can be found everywhere. To a casual visitor the home may seem neat. But its private corners may contain half-started projects, collections of memos, and assorted potential challenges: a guitar to be mastered, a file cabinet to be organized, a household repair to be done. Dreams and visions are the INTJ's form of relaxation. Unfortunately, ambitious plans may go unfulfilled if the INTJ is seduced by the intellectual excitement of a plan without ever actually getting it done. Such a dilemma sets them up for self-criticism, which may lead to frustration.

INTJs as Children

INTJ children crave much of the same independence as INTJ adults. Unless their parents are the same type, this drive may be the root of ongoing parent-child disputes. While neat enough to get by, their rooms may be laboratories for endless explorations and experiments. For a parent to enter this territory may be seen as an invasion of privacy and result in a struggle for power. Often, in high school, INTJs can be "underachievers" who score well on formal tests but aren't interested in the details of daily classroom learning.

INTJs as Parents

As parents, the INTJs' relentless pursuit for self-improvement becomes a model for their children. They encourage a child's independence and self-sufficiency, and the sooner the better. What to others seems uncaring or unaffectionate is, to INTJs, the ultimate caring: teaching their children to stand on their own. For example, when INTJ parents teach their children how to swim they may allow them to dive into deep water – all the time supervising intently – in the name of having the child quickly gain the skill. Other types may stick to shallower waters, wanting the child to feel more comfortable in the learning process. To the INTJ, the issue of comfort or fear is largely irrelevant. What's important is learning how to swim.

INTJs in Professional Life

When you consider how few INTJs there are in the U.S. population (about 1%), it is astounding how much influence on corporate and academic life they have. Their capacity for intellectual and conceptual clarity gives INTJs the vision and the will to see things through to completion – leadership qualities that are prized in our society. Perhaps more than any other type, the INTJ has played a dramatic role in shaping American corporate culture.

For the INTJ, work is the laboratory in which blueprints become reality and then give way to new blueprints. INTJ managers want to stimulate and stretch themselves and their subordinates. INTJ subordinates want to stimulate and stretch themselves and their supervisors. They also want to be given a free hand to experiment; if too tightly controlled, they may become frustrated and resentful. They frequently master the "language" of whatever it is they are involved with. Whether as managers or counselors, they know all the correct words and phrases for a situation. In short, the workplace is one more system that can be organized and improved; all assignments are undertaken with that expectation.

INTJs as Leaders

These four preferences are qualities that most people naturally rely on for strength and confidence, especially in the upper echelons of business. Rather than getting locked into details and specifics as a Sensor (S) might, INTJs translate facts into a bigger picture and provide perspective. While subjectivity may be comforting to most people, it is objectivity that is associated with successful businesses. American organizations tend to operate and give rewards based on a time- and goal-oriented model of logical thinking (T), decision-making, and judging (J). Thus, the INTJ personality type is generally appealing and can be relied on for leadership and direction.

Well-integrated INTJs can conquer most things with ease and grace. As a result, they are frequently elevated quickly in corporate circles. For example, this is likely the predominant type among Japan's corporate leaders. Their ability to take existing ideas and improve each aspect of them, from design to production to marketing, was a key factor in that nation's growth and success in world markets in the late 20th century. While Japanese companies have become more diverse and global in character in recent years, the INTJ technocrat is still a dominant type in the upper levels.

INTJ managers can be perpetual students. Always exploring and envisioning what might be, their intuition (N) is a reservoir of new techniques, programs, incentives, and directions. Their tendency is to improve just about anything, even things that are working well. They'll want to fix it even if it isn't broken. This constant restlessness means that everything in the workplace is up for grabs. Constant evaluation, scrutiny, and revision become driving forces in almost any project. Even if the mandate is to maintain the status quo, an INTJ isn't beyond trying to maintain the status quo with just a few improvements.

Their commitment to efficiency and effectiveness drives them to identify problems in any system that comes their way for review. Often more concerned about action, plans, and vision than about communicating the details and processes needed for implementation, INTJs may be perceived as unyielding, headstrong, overly analytical, and impersonal. Their strength as strategic organizers is underscored by a passion for competence. This may become a weakness when they fail to listen to different perspectives or develop relationships with all relevant parties.

INTJs as Employees

Although a single word cannot possibly describe any type, *independence* is what drives and motivates the INTJ. If they could, they would wish it for everyone. Unfortunately, this drive for independence can conflict with their need to control their immediate surroundings.

As natural conceptualizers, INTJs are the perfect think-tank specialists – intrigued by the future, stimulated with a rich imagination, and supported by their willingness to be accountable. They are often looked to for solutions to complex problems. They provide direction and leadership with a creative flair. Someone once said that the most socially successful people are those who are independent (I), visionary (N), objective (T), and in control (J). These individuals can be counted on for anything and aren't always "spraying" you with their needs.

Statistically, there are more male INTJs than females. Not surprisingly, the INTJ female's independence, intellectual aloofness, and argumentative style may leave her feeling somewhat out of step with more traditionally feminine attributes.

The INTJs' natural tendencies can undermine others and leave staff or colleagues permanently wounded. Even then, INTJs can be blind to their own destructiveness. Their tendency is to blame others for these circumstances. "If I'm good enough to get this far, then others must be wrong in their perceptions," they may conclude.

Even more frustrating to some people is the INTJ's tendency to be somewhat aloof. At work they are very carefully defined and professional, guarding every word and action. Their private lives are limited to a few chosen words and are kept quite separate from the office. Their guarded professionalism at work, coupled with their seemingly asocial personal life, wins them few allies among colleagues. For INTJs, it can be lonely.

INTJs' Workplace Stressors

Naturally at ease with the theoretical, under pressure the INTJ may insist on detailed data collection. As managers or leaders, they may have others collect, identify, inspect, and categorize minute data so that not even the smallest pebble has been left unturned. Under stress, they may question and doubt themselves, which can lead them to shut down personal interactions and even withdraw from the situation. Trusting logic and reason, they can become quickly annoyed when others appear illogical, subjective, and unreasonable.

A weakness of INTJs is their tendency to agree only intellectually with various management concepts. Team building, goal setting, and time management are all marvelous concepts – for others. Generally, they would much rather write about, think about, or even improve upon any of these ideas than engage in the actual processes.

Like other iNtuitives (Ns), the INTJ can become stressed from being bombarded by too many details. They would much rather imagine and speculate than put things into action. Consequently, when confronted with demands, especially those related to people's needs or seemingly trivial project details, the INTJ can become edgy, scattered, and even depressed. It's good for them to take a few moments out of each workday to allow time for reflection and contemplation. That will help to feed their inner inspirations and allow them to enjoy, even momentarily, the fantasy of "what could be" rather than what is.

INTJs' Careers

Their natural bent for achievement and excellence makes INTJs successful in a variety of careers. Almost anything on which they focus their energies can turn to success. They make excellent teachers, especially at the high school and college levels, because their students will be given the opportunity for independent thinking. They are frequently good writers, administrators, researchers,

and lawyers, especially managing partners. They may also gravitate to positions such as scientist, systems analyst, or photographer. They can become restless and frustrated in career choices that demand too much detail or have a high demand for personal services.

Summary

INTJs think and operate from a strategic perspective while focusing on achieving tangible results. They are adept at defining goals, developing detailed plans to achieve those goals, and creating contingency plans. While they are usually open to new ideas that add to accomplishing their plans, their fascination with complex systems may lead to confusion in teammates who seek simplicity and practicality.

Adapted from the writing and teaching of Otto Kroeger and Janet M. Thuesen.

INTJs On a Team

Naturally Bring to a Team

- Are integrative and strategic; their relationships are about achieving a goal
- Skilled in analysis, seeing differences, and creating categories
- Put theories to work by mapping out feasible events, developing agendas, building models
- Tirelessly drive toward the goal
- Use systems thinking, using deductive reasoning to synthesize and organize ideas

Teamwork Style

- Direct by defining the goal, creating detailed plans, outlining contingencies, and defining strategies
- Are devoted to accuracy and precision; they have high expectations of themselves and others
- Carefully make decisions with a focus on goals and a vision
- Prefer privacy, autonomy, and time for reflective thinking

Potential Blind Spots

- May be oblivious to the effect of their responses on others
- Might not give praise and/or feedback as often as others need it
- May be reluctant to delegate, preferring to rely on their own capabilities
- Seem to believe they can be competent at anything

To Help Them Succeed

- Allow them autonomy
- Give them respect for thoughts and feelings, ideas and creativity
- Provide opportunities for constant evaluation and re-evaluation to meet their need for high achievement and competency
- Put them in a situation where they can devise and implement long-range strategies aimed at efficient and effective use of the organization's resources

Adapted from Quick Guide to the 16 Personality Types in Organizations by Sue A. Cooper, Roger R. Pearman, et al.

Managing the INTJ

WORK LABEL – STRATEGIST

- Original thinking
- Interested and innovative
- Single-minded concentration
- Unimpressed with authority
- Natural high-achiever

STRENGTHS

- Pragmatic
- Conceptual
- Autonomous
- Tenacious
- Analytical

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

- Be sensitive to others' needs
- Take care of routine details
- Learn to yield to others' points
- Take time to smell the roses
- Be more empathetic in relationships

TO FUNCTION BEST Support for ideas and projects. Freedom from routine and
INTJs NEED: mundane details. Problems to solve. To see ideas worked out and
 applied.

INTJs ARE FRUSTRATED BY: Routine, redundancy, being sidetracked by others'
 needs and opinions. Being told what to do and how to
 do things. Being micro-managed.

INTJs IRRITATE OTHERS BY: Refusing to yield. Being overly demanding or insistent
 on having their own way. Appearing to be arrogant and
 overly skeptical. Moving too fast. Lack of execution
 and attention to detail.

INTJs VALUE: Logic, ideas, and ingenuity.

ON A TEAM: They analyze the alternatives.