



SPECIAL REPORT – PERSONALITY AND INTERVIEWS

How can knowing your interviewer win you the job? This month we cast aside the veil of secrecy surrounding job interviews and discover how knowing an employer's personality helps us push their hot buttons and avoid their "no go" areas. The person who does that best will get the job. Will that be you?

Introduction

A great resume may get you in the door, but it's your personality that wins you the job. We're not talking about your personality today mind you, we're talking about your ability to understand the interviewer.

Picture this: you've just finished an interview and feel pretty confident about getting the job. Your credentials are outstanding and your job history is solid. But one week later you still haven't heard...and later you find out that someone else got the job.

What happened? Why weren't your stellar credentials enough to make you stand out from the crowd? First of all, good credentials aren't always rare, especially in today's increasingly competitive job market. Just about anyone in the same profession can duplicate a technically strong resume. But there's one thing that makes you different from every other candidate out there...the way you approached the interview.

When two candidates submit strikingly similar resumes the final decision comes down to your interview performance. So how can you put yourself across in a way that ensures you cross the finishing line first? By understanding the interviewer! By knowing their personality and tailoring your pitch to their personal preferences so you can communicate effectively.

We make no apology for the fact that this is a hard-hitting report. You may read things in it that you don't like! Don't shoot us...we're just the messenger. It's our job to be direct and honest so we can help you get the job of your dreams. We'll give you the knowledge...what you do with it is up to you.

Why knowing an interviewer's personality helps us

You may have thought that your interviewer was a Choleric when you met them, but it turns out she is really a Sanguine. How could you have been so wrong? Probably because you didn't know the ABCs of personality. If you'd known, you probably would have found out that she placed much more value on people and relationships than results and achievements...and you would have tailored your approach accordingly.

It all starts with the first interview. In the traditional interview, the majority of the questions are opinion-based. Naturally, personal preferences always come into play where opinions are concerned. If you answer interview questions or communicate in a way that provokes the interviewer's personal prejudices then you will get them offside rather quickly and will be unlikely to get the job.

The ability to judge an interviewer's personality equips us with valuable knowledge on how to speak to each type of person, suggests words or phrases that are likely to get the attention of a particular interviewer and allows us to present ourselves in a ways that builds rapport and creates a strong feeling of trust. After all, its no secret that people feel most comfortable in the company of others just like them, and that they "buy" from people they like and trust.

We can use our understanding of an interviewer's personality to:

- Ensure we provide information in a manner that suits their personal style
- Influence their perceptions about our own style, interview behaviour and cultural fit
- Foster trust and build rapport, so they can see themselves working with us!

What is personality

When many so-called "job experts" talk about personality they refer to topics such as body language, the interviewer's mood and the interview structure. While that information is certainly helpful, they really aren't talking about personality.

Simply defined, personality comprises the internal traits and behaviours that make us unique. Delving a little deeper, personality is an individual's more-or-less stable set of internally motivated predispositions to respond and their observable behaviors in various life situations or contexts. These dispositions and behaviors usually have regularity.

Phew! A long-winded definition, but helpful in some respects at least. Notice that personality is observable and that a given personality will usually act in a predictable way. That's good news for us, because it means we have an opportunity to identify behaviours that indicate a particular personality type.

Take a minute to think about people you know, how many of them are perfectionists, how many of them are socialites, how many always take the lead and how many just sit back and let things happen? Would it be fair to say that most of your friends fit one of those four categories or a mixture of them?

See! You already know how to identify someone's personality. We're simply going to provide you with a few handy tools to help identify personality types faster and use that knowledge to your advantage.

The four personality types

A person's physical appearance can change dramatically over the years, but their personality is ingrained for a lifetime. Most people are not one specific personality type, but normally a mixture of two. That's what makes each of us so special...no one has exactly the same combination!

For example, I'm predominantly Choleric with a strong Melancholic streak. What does that mean? If you were being interviewed by me, you might consider that I'd be expecting a lot to be done very quickly to a high standard...and you'd tailor your interview approach to convey those themes.

Enough already, let's take a look at the four key personality types:

- **Phlegmatics** - calm, dependable, laid-back people who are easy to get along with. Their strengths are flexibility and endurance, but they are prone to passivity.

- **Melancholics** - fastidious, analytic intellectuals who largely keep to themselves. Their strengths are observation, preparation, and resourcefulness, but they tend toward perfectionism and depression.
- **Cholerics** - take-charge, task-oriented leader types for whom relationships are largely a means to an end. Their strengths are boldness and self-motivation, but they may be tactless or quick-tempered.
- **Sanguines** - cheerful, enthusiastic people whose energy comes from being with people. They bring life and smiles to those in their circles but may be scatterbrained, and often lack caution or restraint.

A tongue-in-cheek way of remembering the personality types is that the phlegmatic suffers the problem, the melancholy sees the problem, the choleric solves the problem, and the sanguine *is* the problem. Sanguines would be of a different opinion, certainly, but then again, they usually are anyway. I am speaking here as a *Choleric Melancholic* of course.)

TABLE 1 – The Four Personality Types

Powerful Choleric	Popular Sanguine	Perfect Melancholic	Peaceful Phlegmatic
<p>The Choleric knows it all. "There are two ways to do anything; my way, and the wrong way." He's quick to act and judge, but slow to accept blame for bad decisions. (On Your Mark, Go!)</p>	<p>The Sanguine looks for the fun. "Is it boring here, or does any one else want to PARTY?!" Because of her enthusiasm, she can rally support for any cause. But if things get dull, it's "sayonara" Sanguine. (Get Set, Go!)</p>	<p>The Melancholic is a perfectionist. "Now let's not rush to any quick conclusions until we have all the details." If you need a clever, detailed strategy, ask a Melancholy. Just don't expect him to act on anything until he has all the facts. (On Your Mark, Get Set, Get Set, Get Set...)</p>	<p>The Phlegmatic is easy going and does things at her own pace. "Whatever. I'm easy." Slow to anger and slow to judge, the Phlegmatic is also slow to get excited because basically, she hates change. If you want her to do something, you have to give her a good, sound reason. (On Your Mark...You Know, On Second Thought...)</p>

Different horses for different courses

As you can see from the description of each personality type above, they would vary greatly in their view of what was important during the interview and the manner in which they wanted to receive information.

For example, a Melancholic would want to know every last detail so they could over-analyse your answers to the ⁿth degree, while a Choleric would want to cut to the chase and talk about the results. At the same time, a Sanguine would want to talk about the people and relationships, while a phlegmatic would want a calm, stress-free recounting of your time with a previous employer.

Are you sabotaging your own success by failing to acknowledge personality? Can you imagine what would happen if you approached a strong personality type the wrong way. Imagine these examples:

- The *Melancholic* would be shocked that you jumped into a project or enterprise before fully understanding what you need to do. BUT the *Choleric* would appreciate your decisiveness.
- The *Choleric* would be gravely concerned that you'll probably abandon a task as soon as something more interesting comes along. BUT a *Sanguine* would sympathise and understand that you need variety and new challenges.
- The *Sanguine* would be concerned that you get so sidetracked by details that you lose track of your objective and forget to have fun. BUT the *Melancholic* would rejoice that you've got every base covered.
- The *Phlegmatic* would see the value in postponing an activity indefinitely because things are really just fine the way they are. BUT the Choleric would fume at the lack of action.

Recognising personality types

Let's take a look at how to identify each personality type. We'll limit ourselves to those clues you're likely to see in the limited time available during a job interview and the preceding application process. There's plenty of publicly available material on this topic and I suggest you read Florence Littauer's book *Personality Puzzle* if you have a strong interest.

Pay careful attention to what's important to each personality type so you know how to couch your interview approach. As we go, think about your own personality and identify potential conflicts with interviewers ahead of time so we can eliminate them before they ever raise their ugly head:

- a. **Melancholic:** Orderliness and propriety are important to this person. Their working environment will be spotless and meticulously clean and tidy, and their personal grooming will be impeccable. Dedication to perfection is one of the valuable traits of this personality.

The Melancholic is intellectual looking, quiet, reserved, and a little ill-at-ease in social situations where they don't know everyone. They would rather talk quietly with one person in depth than banter with a group.

Although they take pride in their appearance, they consider compliments on clothes and external niceties to be trivial. The Melancholic is very sensitive and easily hurt and tends to take what others say in humor as personal and hurtful.

Most of all, Melancholics just want someone to understand them. They are the thinker, the philosopher and the analyser. They are the ones who go to the heart of the issue and relish long heart-to-heart chats with a close friend. They have enormous self-discipline and loyalty, and are good listeners. They are the people who have to dot every "i" and cross every "t". The mirror is not clean until that streak is gone etc. They are reserved and extremely introverted.

The Melancholic suffers from 'analysis paralysis' and will often put unrealistic demands on others. They frequently have a poor self-image and can be stubbornly legalistic.

The easiest way to identify a Melancholic is through their need to listen and analyse. Here are some more pointers for recognising this personality type:

- Impeccable personal grooming.
- Conservatively dressed (eg. gray pinstripe)
- Clean and tidy personal space.
- Spends little time building rapport.
- Always on time and everything runs like clockwork.

- f. Focused on detail when asking questions.
 - g. Analyses everything you say.
 - h. Expects a lot of people.
 - i. Thinks everything through logically.
 - j. Is a perfectionist.
 - k. Listens quietly rather than talking.
 - l. Is very precise in the questions they ask and may ask multi-part questions.
 - m. Tends to adopt a more formal tone.
 - n. Follows a strict process, often using comprehensive notes.
 - o. Generally has a serious demeanour.
- b. **Sanguine:** It's easy to notice who is Sanguine, because that is part of who they are! They like to be noticed, and often these people are the easiest to identify simply because they are in the spotlight. Everyone notices the Sanguine. They enjoy talking, and generally "light up the room." They are fun to be around because they love to have fun! It's been said that everyone loves a Sanguine.

Sanguines live for the externals and want you to get excited over their clothes, sense of humor, or new red sports car. Of course, other personality types will not naturally be given to praising the obvious and will feel that to laugh at the Sanguine's jokes and stories will only encourage them to babble on.

This personality type is probably easiest to identify because it is one that demands attention. The Sanguine is the person who makes the grand entrance, has the circle of people all listening raptly to her stories and is everybody's friend.

The Sanguine's shortcomings would include a tendency to waste time, stretching the truth, selfishness and irresponsibility. Because they are so bubbly and talkative they can easily dominate conversations, intimidate people and ignore the needs of others.

The easiest way to identify a Sanguine is through their chatty nature and people focus. Here are some more pointers for recognising this personality type:

- a. Colourful and flamboyant personality.
- b. May wear colourful or 'out there' clothing
- c. Outspoken and chatty.
- d. Gets easily distracted and changes topics quickly.
- e. Late or disorganised.
- f. Focuses on people rather than results.
- g. Talks about relationships and people rather than the task.
- h. Adopts an informal approach.
- i. Talks rather than listens.
- j. May use expressive facial and body gestures.

- c. **Phlegmatic:** You can easily picture a Phlegmatic lying in a hammock with a glass of lemonade, dreamily watching the sun go down. They love peace and quiet. No conflicts, smooth sailing, avoiding any bumps in the road. They will do anything to avoid fights and arguments, and it bothers them when everyone is not getting along. Phlegmatics are conservative and usually neat, efficient, and dependable.

I can picture a Phlegmatic often wondering, if not asking, "Is everything okay between us?" Rest and relaxation are great loves for them. You don't see Phlegmatics getting into trouble with authority very often. They don't demand attention, yet they are worth paying heed to because they often possess a marvelous sense of humor and keen perspective on life.

Compare a Phlegmatic to a chameleon. They can blend into any situation, "changing color" as it were, depending on the people and circumstances. One weakness in the Phlegmatic's personality though is a lack of enthusiasm. You see this type sitting on the couch, not jumping up and down. An excited Phlegmatic is a rare sight. They are worn out just thinking about other people racing about.

Other challenges for the Phlegmatic include their desire to see every conflict quickly and painlessly resolved. Yet another weakness is their stubbornness to change. They are the ones who go to the ice cream shop and order vanilla every time. For the Sanguine, who orders a different flavor every visit, this is rather astonishing.

The easiest way to identify a Phlegmatic is through their laid-back approach. Here are some more pointers for recognising this personality type:

- a. May be more relaxed with dress standards.
 - b. Uses a calm, relaxed voice.
 - c. Doesn't rush the interview.
 - d. Speaks little, listens a lot.
 - e. May spend a lot of time chatting to build rapport.
 - f. Tends to adopt a more informal tone.
- d. **Choleric:** If you're a Choleric you'll know it by now. You'll likely be frustrated by the fact that I wrote about you last and that you had to wade through the previous three summaries to get to the relevant material!

The Choleric is a natural leader. They are the first to step forward and take charge. They can be recognised by their confident walk and authoritative stance. Such people don't want to waste much time on trivial activity with no obvious results or converse with people who have nothing to say of any consequence. They accomplish more than any of the other personality types, can quickly assess what needs to be done and are usually right.

Cholerics work long and hard. Multi-tasking is second nature for them. You may see one eating lunch while reading a book and carrying on a conversation with someone...all at the same time. This is normal for everyone to do some of the time, but the driven Choleric does it constantly. They accomplish an amazing amount of work in a very short time.

Cholerics can easily run rampant over other personality types without even realising it. They will often clash with Melancholics and putting several Cholerics in the room together is a recipe for almost certain disaster. Perhaps the Choleric personality has more weaknesses than strengths, yet we could not function without them. They are confident and can make others confident as well. They are driven people with goals, ready to tackle any problem. They are purposeful and productive.

The easiest way to identify a Choleric is through their 'take-control', outspoken manner. Here are some more pointers for recognising this personality type:

- a. Often dressed in a dark suit, powerful tie and gold watch.
- b. They like to be in control during the interview.
- c. Spends little time building rapport.
- d. They think quickly and talk more than they listen.
- e. Confident, outspoken and opinionated.
- f. Expects a lot of people.
- g. Impatient with people who are not like them.
- h. Knows they are good at what they do and it often shows through.
- i. Needs new challenges to stay interested.
- j. Will ask questions and sometimes offer answers.
- k. Often talks of the bigger picture.

What are the hot and cold buttons for each personality type?

Okay. Now that you know how to judge personality, what will you do with that knowledge? Perhaps you'd like to put it to good use and tailor your interview approach to hit the hot buttons and avoid the 'no go' areas. Here's a guide to what's hot and what's not for an interviewer of each personality type.

a. Melancholic

(1) DO

- Provide detailed answers
- Explain your logic in making a decision
- Show that you think things through and plan ahead
- Answer questions completely - ask if they would like more information
- Weight your emphasis 20% on people, 60% on process and 20% on results

(2) DON'T

- Talk about results without the process involved in achieving them
- Jump from achievement to achievement – give them time to focus
- Interrupt them while they are analyzing what you have said
- Be flamboyant, informal or spend a lot of time on rapport
- Suggest that you make decisions quickly

b. Sanguine

(1) DO

- Be informal, chatty and interested in what they are saying
- Focus on people and relationships

- Place more emphasis on ideas rather than implementing
- Talk about variety, new challenges and meeting people
- Weight your emphasis 60% on people, 20% on process and 20% on results

(2) **DON'T**

- Overdo your emphasis on results
- Cut them off or look like you are bored
- Try to cut rapport short – build it throughout the interview
- Change the topic back to you if they start talking about themselves
- Forget to use a few hand and facial gestures to convey a sense of feeling

c. **Phlegmatic**

(1) **DO**

- Allow them to pause and think at their own pace
- Focus on the journey rather than the outcome
- Weave quality of life values into your answers
- Spend as much time as possible building rapport
- Weight your emphasis 40% on people, 40% on process and 20% on results

(2) **DON'T**

- Cut them off or rush them in any way
- Overly reinforce your strong action bias
- Dominate the interview even though it would be easy to do so
- Be too formal...build rapport at every opportunity
- Use a serious or stern voice...be calm, relaxed and chatty

d. **Choleric**

(1) **DO**

- Talk about ideas, concepts and lots of implementing
- Focus on results, action, priorities and achievements
- Let the interviewer talk as much as possible
- Ask the hard questions...they will respect you for it
- Weight your emphasis 20% on people, 20% on process and 60% on results

(2) **DON'T**

- Provide long, waffling answers that don't get to the point quickly
- Be overly informal even if you feel relaxed
- Forget to ask lots of questions to encourage them to talk about their vision

- Be timid – tell them you know you can add value
- Indicate that you won't act until you have all the information

Conclusion

Technical skills alone are not enough to land the best jobs. The best person for the job doesn't get the job...the people who are best at getting jobs get the best jobs.

Knowing your interviewer is a surefire way to make sure you put yourself across in a way that gets their attention, creates a real bond of trust and shows them that you are just perfect for that job.

So how do you 'work' an interview panel with several different personalities. Ah! That's a topic for another report. Until then...

I hope this Special Report on *The Power of Personality* proves useful. If you have a moment, why not click through and see what other tools we have available at our website for helping you get a damn good job a lot faster. Go on...put your feet up and invest 5 minutes in yourself...you're worth it!

Regards

David



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Please note that while we are based in Perth, our clientele encompasses the Eastern Seaboard and Asia Pacific