

INFJs trust their visions, are compassionate and insightful, and quietly exert influence. They enjoy working alone or in compatible small groups using their inspirations for people's growth and development.

Contributions to the Organization

- Provide future-oriented insights directed at serving human needs
- Follow through on commitments
- Work with integrity and consistency
- Use periods of solitude and concentration to come up with creative ideas
- Organize complex interactions between people and tasks

Leadership Style

- Lead through their vision of what is best for others and the organization
- Win cooperation rather than demand it
- Utilize a quiet, intense, and persistent course of action toward strategic objectives
- Work to make their inspirations real
 - Motivate others toward their ideals in a determined manner

Preferred Learning Style

- Individualized and reflective so depth can be attained
- Focused, structured, and complex with an emphasis on concepts and relationships

Potential Pitfalls

- May find their ideas overlooked and underestimated
- May not be forthright with criticism
- May be reluctant to intrude upon others and thus keep too much to themselves
- May operate with single-minded concentration for what they believe is best for the future

Order of Preferences*

1. Intuition
2. Feeling
3. Thinking
4. Sensing

* See pages 26–29 for further explanation.

Problem-Solving Approach

- Want to identify an internal vision of what is possible (N), especially in relation to people and values (F)
- May need to include objective views of their vision of the future (T) as well as the details needed to make it a reality (S) for optimal results

Preferred Work Environments

- Contain people strongly focused on ideals that make a difference to human well-being
- Provide opportunities for creativity and expressing their values
- Encourage harmony and consideration
- Have smooth-running processes respectful of people's needs
- Reward personal insights
- Foster quiet with time and space for reflection
- Are organized and playful

Suggestions for Development

- May need to develop political savvy and assertiveness skills when presenting their ideas
- May need to learn to give constructive feedback to others on a timely basis
- May need to solicit feedback and suggestions along the way
- May need to relax and be more open to the present situation

Why This Career Works for Terry

For Terry, as with most NFs, it is very important to make a positive difference in someone's life. Understanding people and helping them to understand themselves is how Terry spends most of his time and energy. It is through his intensive and extensive study of psychology and his counseling that Terry reaches out to others.

Besides being a counselor, Terry is a theorist. His introverted Intuition (dominant) allows him to see the relationships between various concepts and grasp complex ideas. He is constantly synthesizing and integrating them into his own views on psychology, which he develops into original ideas. He also writes his theories in the form of in-depth and substantive papers to share with others.

But it is not enough for Terry to have vision. His extraverted Feeling (auxiliary) requires him to connect with and share his ideas with others. His values are so clear, and his desire to help others so strong, that he can sound evangelical at times. In all of the activities he participates in with others — teaching, counseling, or training — his Feeling side is engaged in trying to realize his mission.

Terry has become less idealistic about the world. His shift toward the use of his third function (Thinking) is evident in several ways. In the first half of his life, all of Terry's important decisions were heavily influenced by his Feeling. As he started to use his Thinking more, he began to question many long-held beliefs, especially those concerning his religious convictions and relationships with family members. As a result, he now makes decisions based more on what he wants to do than on what he feels he should do. He has become more assertive

and is better equipped to go after those things in life he values.

Common Threads

Although Helen, Terry, and Bob have different backgrounds, experiences, and careers, there are certain common threads woven through their stories. Specific interests and abilities may differ, but owing to their similar temperament values, the *same hierarchy* of their psychological functions, and the "world" they use them in (inner or outer), there are certain observations we can make about the needs of many INFJs.

What follows is a list of the most important elements — the formula, if you will, for INFJ satisfaction. Given the uniqueness of all individuals — even those who share the same type — this list will not describe each INFJ equally well. The important thing is that these ten elements, with varying degrees of intensity and in different orders of importance, identify what INFJs need to be satisfied.

After you have reviewed this list, you might find it useful to go back and try to prioritize the elements in order of *their importance to you*. When doing this, think of past work experiences as well as your present job, and what you found particularly satisfying or unsatisfying. Try to look for *themes* that run through several experiences, not just *events* which might be true of one work situation but not of another.

As an INFJ, career satisfaction means doing work that:

1. Lets me consider and create new ideas and/or approaches to a variety of problems, mostly those that help others to grow and develop
2. Lets me produce a product or service that I believe in and am proud of

3. Recognizes my authorship and ownership and my unique contributions
4. Lets me express myself and see the results of my vision
5. Lets me implement my ideas for the good of people or in the service of others; lets me work with others on a one-to-one basis
6. Is done in a friendly and tension-free environment where my ideas are seriously considered and where I am psychologically supported for my efforts
7. Can be done independently but with the opportunity to share frequently with others in an environment that is friendly and free of interpersonal conflict
8. Lets me organize my own time and work environment and exert significant control over both the process and product
9. Gives me adequate time to formulate and process my ideas so they are thoroughly prepared
10. Is in harmony with my personal values and beliefs and lets me maintain a high degree of personal and professional integrity

Work-related strengths and weaknesses of INFJs include:

STRENGTHS

Good at thinking up alternative and creative approaches to problems
 Able to understand complex concepts
 Promote harmony among others
 Persuasive leaders and committed to what they believe in
 Like to help others develop

WEAKNESSES

Can be inflexible and single-minded
 Can be impractical about viability of ideas

Can be perfectionist and too independent for corporate culture
 May communicate in ways too complex for others to understand

Popular Occupations for INFJs

In listing occupations that are popular among INFJs, it is important to note that there are successful people of all types in all occupations. However, the following are occupations INFJs may find particularly satisfying and some of the reasons why. This is by no means a comprehensive listing. It is included to inform you of occupations that INFJs frequently find satisfying and to suggest possibilities you may not have previously considered.

COUNSELING/TEACHING

- Career counselor
- Psychologist
- Teacher: high school or college English, art, music, social sciences, drama
- Educational consultant
- Librarian

These occupations allow INFJs to use the ideas and knowledge to help others. The counseling and teaching fields require very personal interaction, often on a one-to-one basis, allowing INFJs to make in-depth connections with others. INFJs also enjoy studying, learning, and the growth opportunities found in an educational context, so they are usually quite comfortable in an academic setting.

RELIGION

- Priest/clergy/monk/nun
- Religious worker
- Director of religious education

Religious work requires a deep and personal commitment and a work philosophy that can be characterized as a mission. INFJs frequently see their work that way and find

deep satisfaction in sharing their philosophy and beliefs with others.

THE ARTS

- Artist
- Playwright
- Novelist
- Poet
- Designer

The appeal of the arts to the INFJ is the ability to create unique works, using their own ideas and vision. The arts enable INFJs to express themselves in a personal way, and the result is often to have an impact on others. With these occupations, the work is generally done independently, allowing the INFJ to organize and control the environment, the process, and the product.

SOCIAL SERVICES

- Health care administrator
- Director, social service agency
- Mediator/conflict resolver
- Social scientist
- Social worker
- Mental health counselor

The social service occupations require a commitment to helping others, often within an organizational structure. Most INFJs enjoy working in such a setting, especially when it involves a small and close-knit staff. Social service enables the INFJ to consider and develop new approaches to the problems of individuals or society. Many times social workers work independently on a caseload, allowing them to have frequent and one-on-one interaction with clients and colleagues.

BUSINESS

- Human resources manager
- Marketer (of ideas and/or services)
- Organizational development consultant
- Employee assistance program coordinator/counselor
- Job analyst

Although INFJs do not tend to gravitate toward business careers in large numbers, there are areas of business in which INFJs may find satisfaction.

Human resources, or personnel, and organizational development consulting are the "people" parts of business, requiring an interest in and facility with many different types of people. These occupations enable the INFJ to help others find jobs, structure effective work environments, and engage in creative problem solving in which people are the focus.

The marketing occupations enable INFJs to use their creative problem-solving abilities, often working on a team. If INFJs have significant input into the process and are able to maintain a comfortable level of personal and professional integrity, they can find this type of work satisfying.

Remember, these are only some of the areas that provide satisfying expression for the unique natural talents of the INFJ.

Implications for the Job Search

Knowing the particular strengths and blind spots of your type can afford you a tremendous advantage in your job search campaign. In all aspects of the process, from conducting research into available positions, identifying and contacting prospective employers, developing personal marketing tools such as résumés, arranging and conducting job interviews, negotiating salaries, to finally accepting a position, people will act true to their type. Being able to capitalize on your assets and compensate for your liabilities can make the difference between a successful and unsuccessful job search.

The differences between types are sometimes subtle and other times dramatic. It is the subtle variations in advice we offer that make the real difference between success and failure in a job search. The concept of

“networking,” or meeting with and talking to people to gather information about potential jobs, serves as a good example. Extraverts will naturally enjoy networking and are advised to do so on a large scale, while Introverts find more limited and targeted networking, especially with people they already know, easier. Sensors tend to network with people in a defined scope, while Intuitives will go far and wide to find people often seemingly unrelated to their field of interest. Further, Feelers take networking, like everything else, very personally and enjoy establishing warm rapport, while Thinkers will be more objective and detached in their style. Finally, Judges tend to ask fewer and more structured questions during their networking, while Perceivers could ask questions of all sorts all day long! One valuable search technique, many ways to implement it.

Pathways to Success

As we will detail in the following pages, your strength and talent for the job search lie in thoughtful planning, creative problem solving, and your ability to communicate your commitment to what you believe in. But beware your tendency to become single-minded in your research and unrealistic in your objectives.

As an INFJ, your most effective strategies will build on your abilities to:

Think through and formulate an innovative, organized job search plan.

- Use your creativity to plot out a campaign in a new and different way — setting you apart from other candidates to potential employers.
- Use your organizational skills to stay on top of the project, make a plan, be on

time, remember to send a note after the interview, follow up with prospective employers, etc.

While working with us to make a career switch from corporate law to the more specialized area of environmental law, Sue easily saw possibilities that could incorporate her legal skills and her interests. She brainstormed the names of organizations she might like to work for, then researched them thoroughly. Having attempted to determine their needs, she “packaged” herself in a way that made her attractive to prospective employers. An organized person by nature, Sue designed and conducted her search true to her type, by following up interviews with letters, calling people back at the times they asked her to, and keeping good records of her progress.

Network on a limited basis.

- Enlist the help of people with whom you have developed relationships over the years and who know you well to identify people to contact about career opportunities.
- During each interview, ask for additional recommendations of other people for you to see to more fully research the field or a particular job.

When Helen was looking for more fulfilling work — work that would serve her sense of mission — she began by speaking with friends and priests within the church. These informational interviews led her to discuss her job plans and interests with the then acting coordinator of the educational publishing project. In talking to him, she learned he was only serving temporarily, and, therefore, the job was about to become available. For Helen, talking to friends and associates on a one-on-one basis helped

her to find a satisfying position which (like many of the best jobs) was never advertised in the public job market.

Establish rapport with interviewers and potential employers.

- Use your extraordinary ability to “read” people’s needs and motivations.
- Let employers sense your natural warmth and enthusiasm, and demonstrate your ability to listen and communicate articulately.

A client of ours, John, was in the running for a personnel manager position at a small company. He learned that he was one of four applicants asked to return for a second interview and felt he needed to set himself apart from the other candidates. In preparation for this important interview, John spent some time re-reading background information on the company with an eye for more personal details about the staff.

Being a father of two young children, John was interested to discover that two of the principals were parents of school-aged children in his hometown. During the first moments of the interview, while everyone was getting seated, John asked how the children were enjoying the new play scape recently constructed on their playground. Thus, he was able to establish something they had in common while creating a friendly and relaxed atmosphere. The conversation also allowed John to demonstrate his knowledge of and interest in community activities and his ability to get along well with people.

Consider options thoughtfully, without rushing to judgment.

- Capitalize on your propensity for thinking things through in a careful way.

- Decide to give yourself a few minutes to keep open options you might have eliminated at first thought.

Upon relocating to New York City, Cynthia began interviewing for positions in art departments of advertising agencies. She found herself with a “good” problem: after completing interviews at four agencies, she was offered positions at two. Both would provide steady work at competitive salaries. Instead of making a hasty decision that would result in job security and an end to the search process, Cynthia asked both agencies for one week’s time to consider her options. During that week she spent time carefully weighing the pros and cons of each opportunity until she came to a surprising decision: she declined both offers and instead began working on a free-lance basis at all four agencies! Her decision gave her the flexibility, free time, and independence she would have given up had she accepted either of the staff positions.

Create a position that will meet your specific needs.

- Use your vision to anticipate trends, where people with your talents will be needed in the future, etc.
- Demonstrate that talent to prospective employers by letting them know how you will help them achieve goals or solve problems.

While working as a kitchen designer, Bob used his natural Intuition to see the need for a system that would allow his customers to actually see on paper what their redesigned kitchens would look like before spending the enormous amount of money it would take to have the work done. Imagining that the technology might be available to create such a system, or might already be in exist-

ence, he began his research. First he talked to a computer-whiz friend, which ultimately led him to the company he now represents. His ability to see the possibilities and then demonstrate that vision to the potential employer won him the job he now loves.

Find creative solutions to obstacles that arise.

- Approach temporary setbacks as problems to be solved rather than rebuffs or insurmountable obstacles.
- Use your natural ability to look ahead, focus on the next opportunity, or recover from a disappointment.

Another client, Sandy, tried unsuccessfully for six weeks to get an appointment with the director of human resources of a company he wanted to work for. In discussions with a neighbor who worked for the company, Sandy discovered that the director was an avid sailor. On a long shot, Sandy sent a copy of an article listing new and innovative gadgets and supplies for outfitting sailboats. He attached a personal note saying he was trying to get an appointment to see the director and would like to talk with him further about the other creative ways Sandy might be able to make his life easier. When Sandy called to follow up three days later, the director not only remembered his name but interviewed him the following week.

Possible Pitfalls

Although all people are unique, there are certain *potential* blind spots which many INEJs share. We specify "potential" because some of the following *may* be true of you, while others may clearly not apply. While considering them, you may notice that these tendencies do not relate just to the job search, but rather describe pitfalls that you

may have experienced in other aspects of your life as well. It is therefore helpful to consider each one in terms of your past experiences by asking yourself, "Is this true for me?" And if so, "How did this tendency prevent me from getting something that I wanted?" You will probably notice that the key to overcoming your blind spots is the conscious and thoughtful development of your third and fourth functions (Thinking and Sensing). Many of the suggestions will be difficult to implement, but the more you use these functions, the fewer problems they will cause you in the future.

Concentrate on the facts and details of the situation, not just the more interesting big picture.

- This requires a conscious effort to tune in to what is actually before you — to read what is on the lines, not just what is *between* them.
- Make notes ahead of time to be sure you ask the practical questions about what a job is really like, including hours, duties, salary, benefits, reporting structure, etc.

Try to establish realistic expectations about the job search process and the potential outcome.

- Engage in "reality testing" to make sure you are being realistic about the market, your skills, and the amount of time a search will take. Ask a friend to help you by playing devil's advocate with your plan.
- Try to set more realistic goals to avoid the tendency to become overly perfectionistic and then experience the disappointment that comes from not accomplishing all you hoped.

Try to avoid making decisions based solely on your personal feelings rather than on more objective data.

- Remember that you naturally see things from a personal perspective and need to consciously engage your logical thinking skills.
- Don't confuse rapport established during an interview with personal friendship. Keep yourself a bit detached from the situation, deciding not to make a permanent connection until you know a lot more.

When discussing your skills and abilities, focus on how you can meet the prospective employer's needs, rather than your own.

- Show the prospective employer you have done your research by incorporating information about the company's current challenges and then demonstrate how you might help meet them by recalling your past experiences and accomplishments.
- Express the willingness to take some necessary risks to take on a new challenge and prove yourself. Take an extra few seconds to consider another way, especially after you think you have made up your mind.

Avoid spending too much time considering possibilities and not enough time acting on them.

- Develop a reasonable list of options to pursue and a timetable in which to research them. Hold yourself accountable for meeting an established quota of letters written, phone calls made, or interviews completed within a particular time frame.
- Try to be flexible in setting job criteria and throughout the negotiation process, remembering that sometimes unexpected benefits appear when you stay open to another point of view.

The Final Piece

Now that you have a solid understanding of your type under your belt, you can see how your strengths and preferences suit you better for some kinds of jobs and for some approaches to a job search. But as an INFJ, you've already noticed that you are not equally drawn to *every* career or field listed in the Popular Occupations section. The next and final step in the process is to look at how your type meshes with your personal interests. So now turn to Chapter 24 to put your new knowledge to work by finding out how your interests, skills, and values can combine with your type to let you find the work you were meant to do.