

Workplace Personalities, Self-Knowledge, and Office Conflict Immunization

If you care about professional success, you almost need to make working with new personality types a part of your job.

It's easy to develop a bubble in the workplace, especially in small companies. Many companies start out with a pretty homogenous culture with pretty homogenous personalities. For all the faults of this approach, it does make it easy for people to know, trust, like, and cooperate with each other.

Inevitably, though, your bubble gets burst. Businesses grow. Businesses diversify. Businesses hire better people, and worse people. And not everyone is going to relate to you or perceive you in the same way.

One person's "helpful" is another person's "controlling." One person's "confident" is another person's "arrogant." One person's "humility" is another person's "lack of initiative."

Dealing with peoples' reactions and expectations only gets more complicated as a company grows. So if you're only used to people who like your "helpfulness," you're going to be caught completely off guard when someone finds your help offensive. Like someone who skipped vaccination day, you'll fall sick in no time.

Fortunately, there is a way to immunize yourself.

It's helpful to find out the range of responses to your own personality type, modus operandi, and foibles as quickly as possible so you can adjust your course to be more effective with all people in the future. This is the reason to try working with as many people of as many different personality types as possible.

Work with touchy people, angry people, chill people, workaholic people, "creative" people, and everything in between. You'll learn from them just how variable opinions about any one thing you do will be. You'll learn to take the feedback and social pressure from others with a grain of salt (you'll see that some feedback is more correlated to the personality type of the giver than to your actions). And you'll gain from their feedback a few universally-repeated observations that may really sting - but which will teach you to be a better human in the end.

Relating to new personnel in a job can be hard. When scaling happens fast or when you're busy, it can seem unnecessary. But if you want to avoid unnecessary conflict and gain necessary wisdom with these outsiders, try "inoculating" yourself to all the different kinds of people who make up the world of business, for better or for worse.