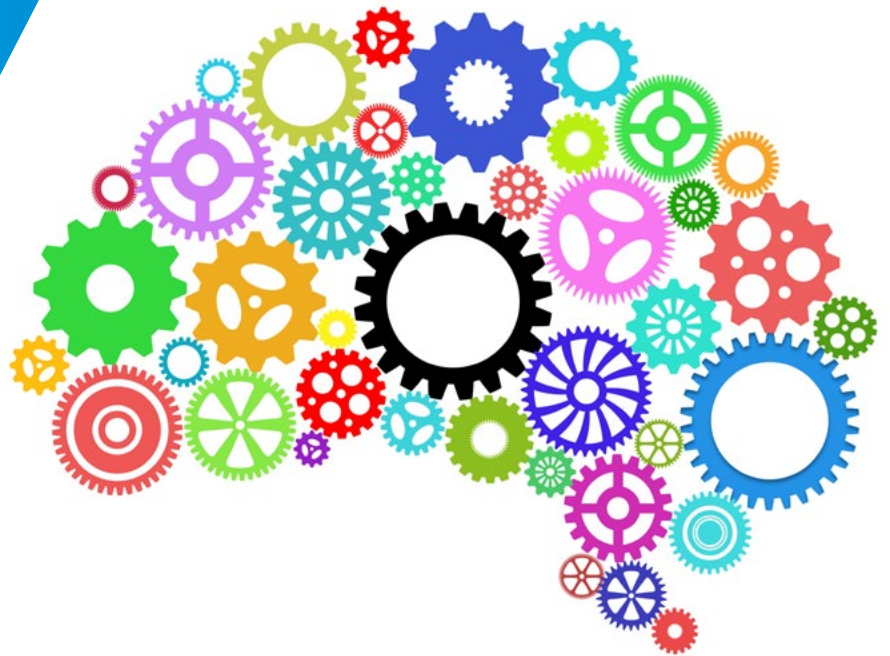


# PERSONALITY TYPE AND LEADERSHIP

Execution, Influence, Strategic Thinking  
and Relationship Building



# Contents

Personality Type and Leadership –  
Execution, Influence, Strategic Thinking & Relationship Building ..... **3**

Leadership Through the Lens of Personality Type ..... **4**

Sensing-Thinking – “Doing it Right the First Time” ..... **5**

*ST Leaders – Key Contributions* ..... 6

*ST Leaders – Common Pitfalls* ..... 7

*ST Leaders – Moving Forward* ..... 8

Sensing-Feeling – “Lean on Me” ..... **9**

*SF Leaders – Key Contributions* ..... 10

*SF Leaders – Common Pitfalls* ..... 11

*SF Leaders – Moving Forward* ..... 12

Intuition-Feeling – “Inspiration for the Future” ..... **13**

*NF Leaders – Key Contributions* ..... 14

*NF Leaders – Common Pitfalls* ..... 15

*NF Leaders – Moving Forward* ..... 16

Intuition-Thinking – “Begin with the End in Mind” ..... **17**

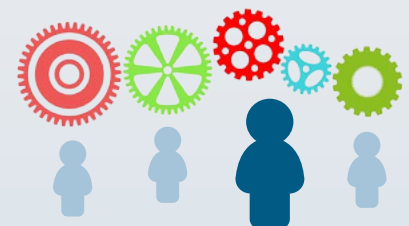
*NT Leaders – Key Contributions* ..... 18

*NT Leaders – Common Pitfalls* ..... 19

*NT Leaders – Moving Forward* ..... 20

Type-Alike Challenges ..... **21**

Summary ..... **21**



## Personality Type and Leadership – Execution, Influence, Strategic Thinking & Relationship Building

We set out to explore the relationships between personality type and leadership to provide MBTI professionals with greater insight into the leadership contributions and challenges of different people. We believe this will prove useful in your work with individual leaders, and provide you with a greater understanding of your own leadership journey.

It is well-established that individuals with certain personality type preferences find some leadership activities easier than others. Yet we also know that effective leadership requires utilizing a wide range of behaviours – whether they are natural to us or not.

In Strengths Based Leadership, Tom Rath and Barry Conchie highlight four domains which are critical for an individual to be a successful leader. For every leader, some of the behaviours and actions related to these domains come naturally, while others require greater effort and concentration. Regardless of ease or comfort, all of them are necessary components of effective leadership.

### Strengths Based Leadership: Critical Domains

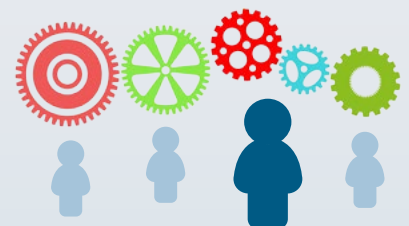
- Executing – transforming ideas into reality
- Influencing – selling change and getting buy-in
- Relationship Building – motivating people and building teams
- Strategic Thinking – analyzing current and future challenges

In this study, we surveyed individuals about their leadership strengths, difficulties, contributions and challenges related to the four critical domains outlined in Strengths Based Leadership. The key contributions we explored were based on the work by Jack Zenger and Joseph Folkman (2014)\* who looked at key behaviours of effective leaders at all levels. Our goal is to highlight personality type patterns that further our understanding of effective leadership and the developmental opportunities for current and emerging leaders.

### ABOUT THIS STUDY:

298 certified MBTI professionals completed our 88 item survey. Respondents include professionals working in the education, government, business and not-for-profit sectors.

\*Zenger & Folkman (2014). The skills leaders need at every level. Harvard Business Review.



## Leadership Through the Lens of Personality Type

Professionals who work with personality type find it useful to group preferences together in ways that are meaningful to them and to their task. Isabel Myers considered the preferences used for gathering information (S or N) and the preferences for making decisions (T or F) the most important combination.

Known as Function Pairs – ST, SF, NT, NF – these middle two letters in each person’s personality type tell us about the information individuals look for and trust, and how they make decisions. They play a significant role in where people focus their attention, how they solve problems, and their natural leadership style.

### ST’s | ESTJ, ISTJ, ESTP, ISTP

**Known as:** The “Bottom-line” Leaders

**Leadership style:** Task-focused approach, dedication to creating and abiding by policies and procedures

**Primary Goal in Leadership:** Efficiency

**Focus on:** Specific deliverables

**Motto:** “Doing it right the first time”

### SF’s | ESFJ, ISFJ, ESFP, ISFP

**Known as:** The “In-Service-of-People” Leaders

**Leadership Style:** People-focused approach, striving to meet the immediate needs of internal and external others

**Primary Goal in Leadership:** Helping others

**Focus on:** Offering support

**Motto:** “Lean on me”

### NF’s | ENFJ, INFJ, ENFP, INFP

**Known as:**  
The “Development-of-People” Leaders

**Leadership style:** People-focused approach, catalyzing people around long-term personal and organizational vision

**Primary Goal in Leadership:**  
Empowering others

**Focus on:** Encouraging growth

**Motto:** “Inspiration for the future”

### NT’s | ENTJ, INTJ, ENTP, INTP

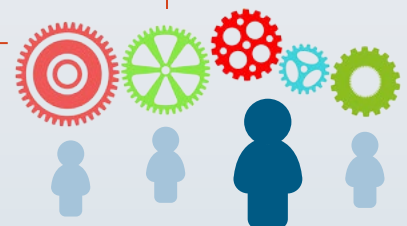
**Known as:** The “Systems-Analysis” Leaders

**Leadership Style:** Conceptual-focused approach, seeking long-term strategies that can be implemented to maximize deliverables

**Primary Goal in Leadership:**  
Mastery and competence

**Focus on:** Improving systems

**Motto:** “Begin with the end in mind”



## Sensing-Thinking – “Doing it Right the First Time”

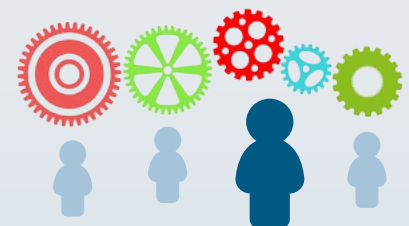


Leaders with preferences for Sensing and Thinking naturally focus on concrete specifics and getting things done in a logical and organized way. In our study, responses from the ST group were indicative of a task-focused and analytical approach to work.

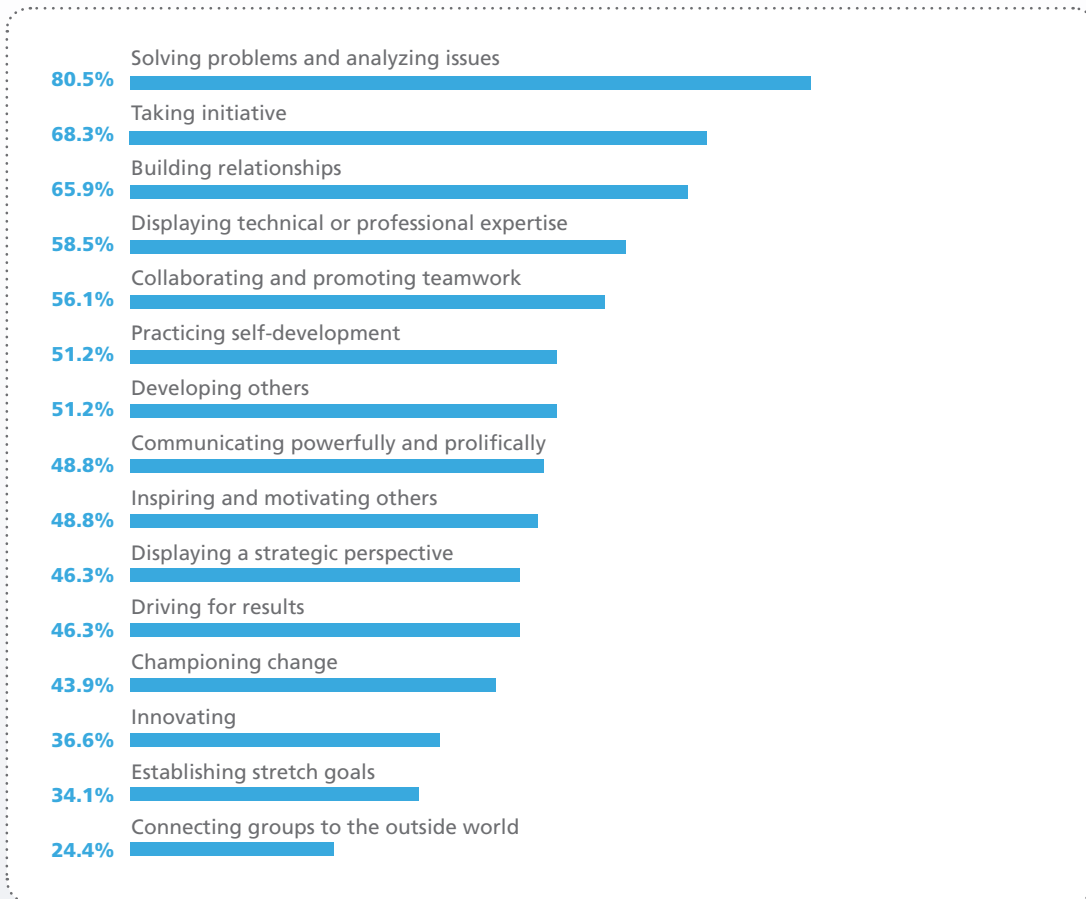
Easier for ST Leaders	More Difficult for ST Leaders:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working autonomously</li> <li>• Written communication</li> <li>• Solving problems</li> <li>• Taking the initiative</li> <li>• Being analytical</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delegating tasks</li> <li>• Sharing information about yourself</li> <li>• Networking</li> </ul>

The behaviours reported as easiest for the ST group were primarily related to getting things done and solving problems – the Executing element of leadership. Based on the tendency of T preferences to focus on the impersonal and use logical analysis to solve problems, and the general task-focused approach of STs in general, these findings are not surprising.

Meanwhile, the STs in our study reported having a more difficult time delegating tasks to others, networking, and sharing information about themselves - behaviours that mainly revolve around the leadership domain of Relationship Building. As individuals focused on the bottom line, STs appear to struggle with letting go of tasks and connecting with colleagues on a personal level.

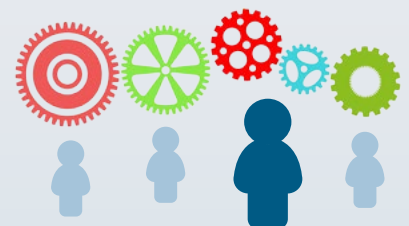


## ST LEADERS – KEY CONTRIBUTIONS

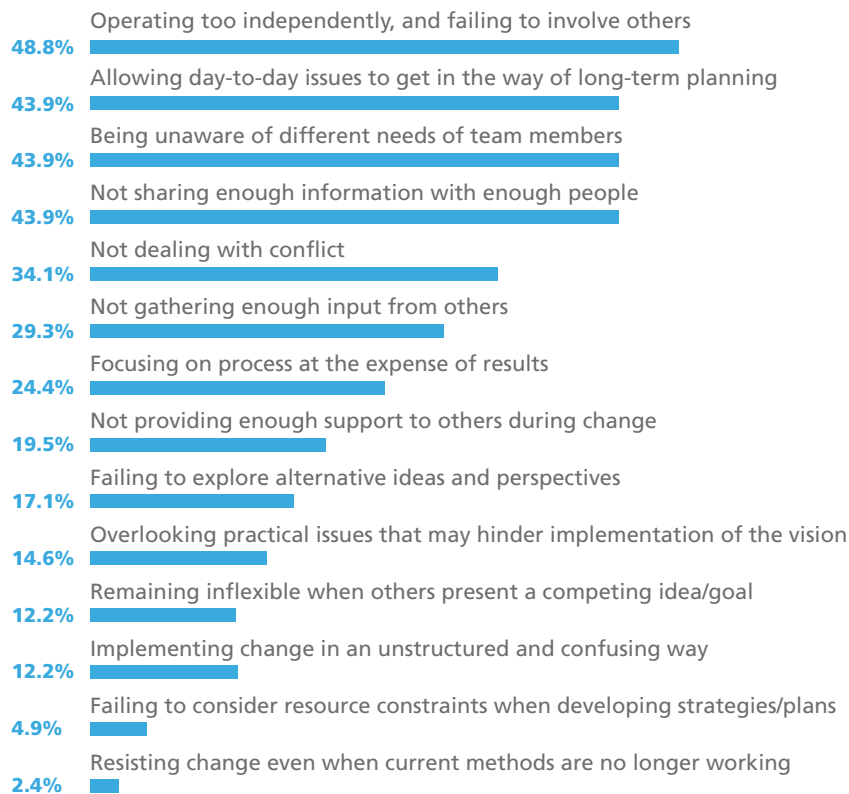


The key contribution selected by the vast majority of STs was solving problems and analyzing issues – endorsed by 81% of the respondents. This was followed by taking initiative and building relationships. While taking initiative fits well with other data about the approach of STs in the workplace, building relationships is not commonly attributed as a natural activity for these personality types. However, as we will see later on in this report, STs are very willing to build relationships in order to complete tasks. In other words, they are happy to work with people in order to get work done.

\*Zenger & Folkman (2014). The skills leaders need at every level. Harvard Business Review.



## ST LEADERS – COMMON PITFALLS

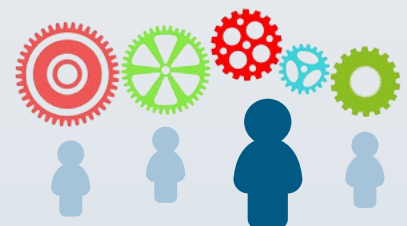


### The most frequently endorsed pitfalls of ST types were:

- Operating too independently – 49%
- Not sharing enough information – 44%
- Lack of awareness of team member needs – 44%
- Allowing day-to-day issues to get in the way of long range planning – 44%

The first three of these pitfalls relate to Relationship Building, and they outline some of the challenges that STs may face when working with others. As their natural focus is on objectives and getting things done, they are willing to work with people when it helps accomplish their goals, but they may not spend enough time on recognizing the personal needs of others.

The last pitfall, getting caught up in day-to-day tasks, is a common challenge for individuals with Sensing preferences which can hinder them in the realm of strategic thinking. For ST leaders, stepping back and connecting their tasks with long-range goals may be an important thing for them to put on their to-do list.



## ST LEADERS – MOVING FORWARD

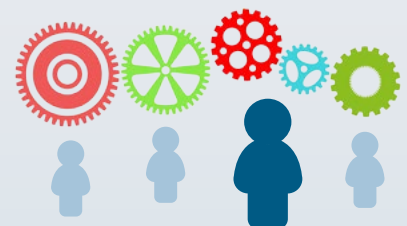
Revolving around the leadership domain of Executing, the contributions of ST leaders include:

- Taking action and staying focused on objectives
- Analyzing information and solving problems
- Develop efficient procedures and policies
- Applying their depth of knowledge and experience to challenges

For STs, focusing on the leadership domains of Strategic Thinking and Influencing are likely to be fruitful.

### ST leaders may need to:

- Delegate more frequently; review which tasks/projects to keep versus what to give up
- Find ways to connect with others beyond the task at hand
- Take time to evaluate future opportunities
- Be more open to change and innovative methods





## Sensing-Feeling – “Lean on Me”

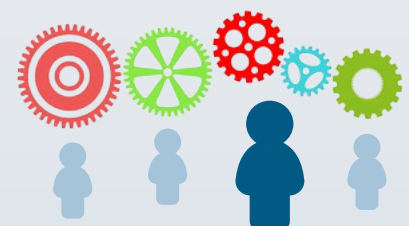
**SELF IMPROVEMENT** STRATEGIC OUTLOOK  
**BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS**  
 INNOVATION **DEVELOPING OTHERS**  
 INSPIRING OTHERS **COLLABORATION** PROBLEM SOLVING

Individuals with preferences for Sensing and Feeling naturally focus their attention on concrete realities and data in order to provide practical help and support to people. Responses from the SF group in our study did reflect a more person-focused approach to leadership.

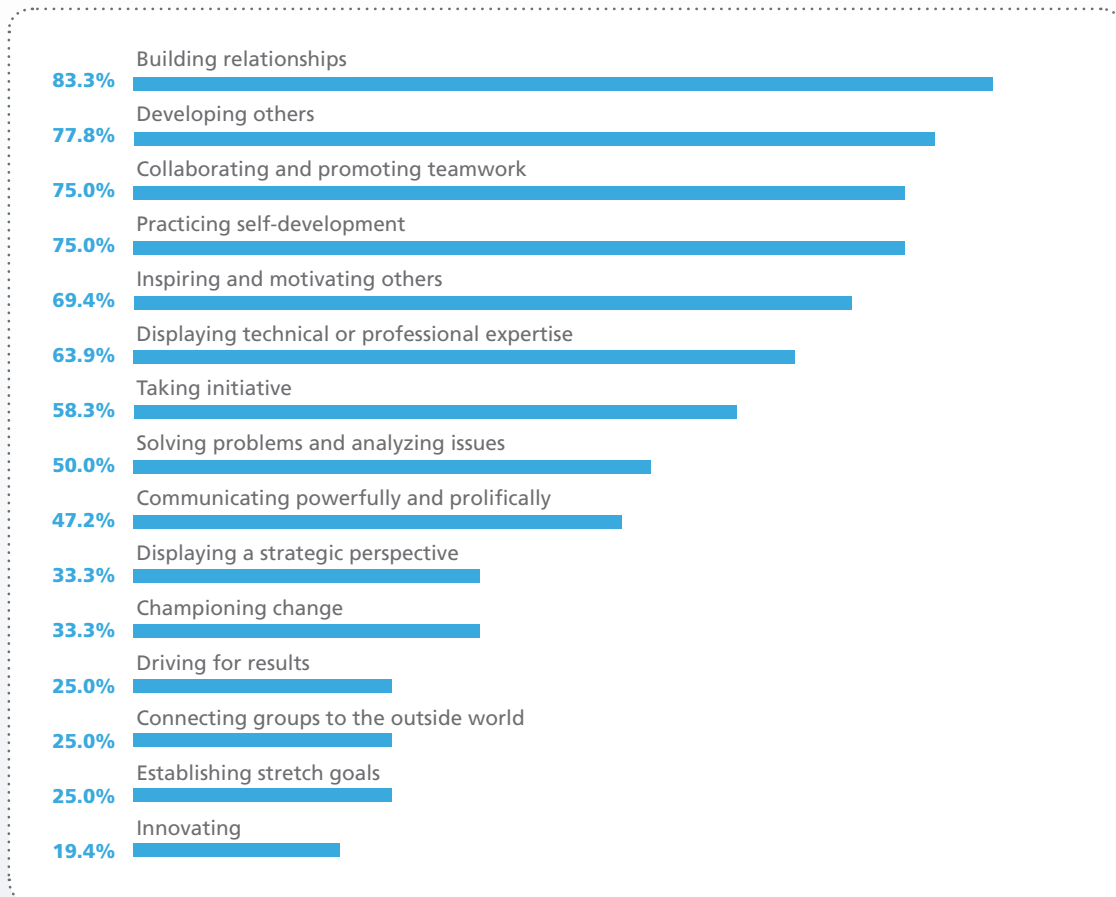
Easier for SF Leaders	More Difficult for SF Leaders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making sure everyone is heard</li> <li>• Empathizing</li> <li>• Creating harmonious work environments</li> <li>• Maintaining work relationships</li> <li>• Focusing on the present</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negotiating</li> <li>• Making tough decisions</li> <li>• Strategic planning</li> <li>• Recognizing emerging opportunities</li> </ul>

The leadership behaviours that SFs reported as easier to engage in revolve primarily around the leadership domain of Relationship Building. SFs indicated that creating harmony, cohesion and maintaining work relationships were relatively easy things for them to do. Given what we know about the F’s preference for making decisions that result in workplace harmony, and SF being focused on what individuals may need in the present moment, results such as these are not unexpected and provide a strong validation of personality type theory.

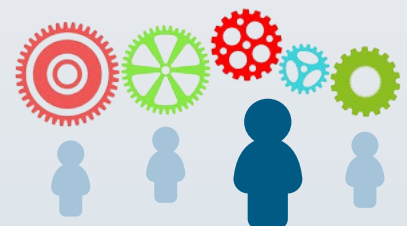
What SFs find more difficult is negotiation, making tough decisions, strategic planning and focusing on emerging opportunities. These behaviours relate to the Strategic Thinking and Influencing leadership domains requiring SFs to engage in behaviour that is more future-oriented and impersonal, typically outside of the SF comfort zone.



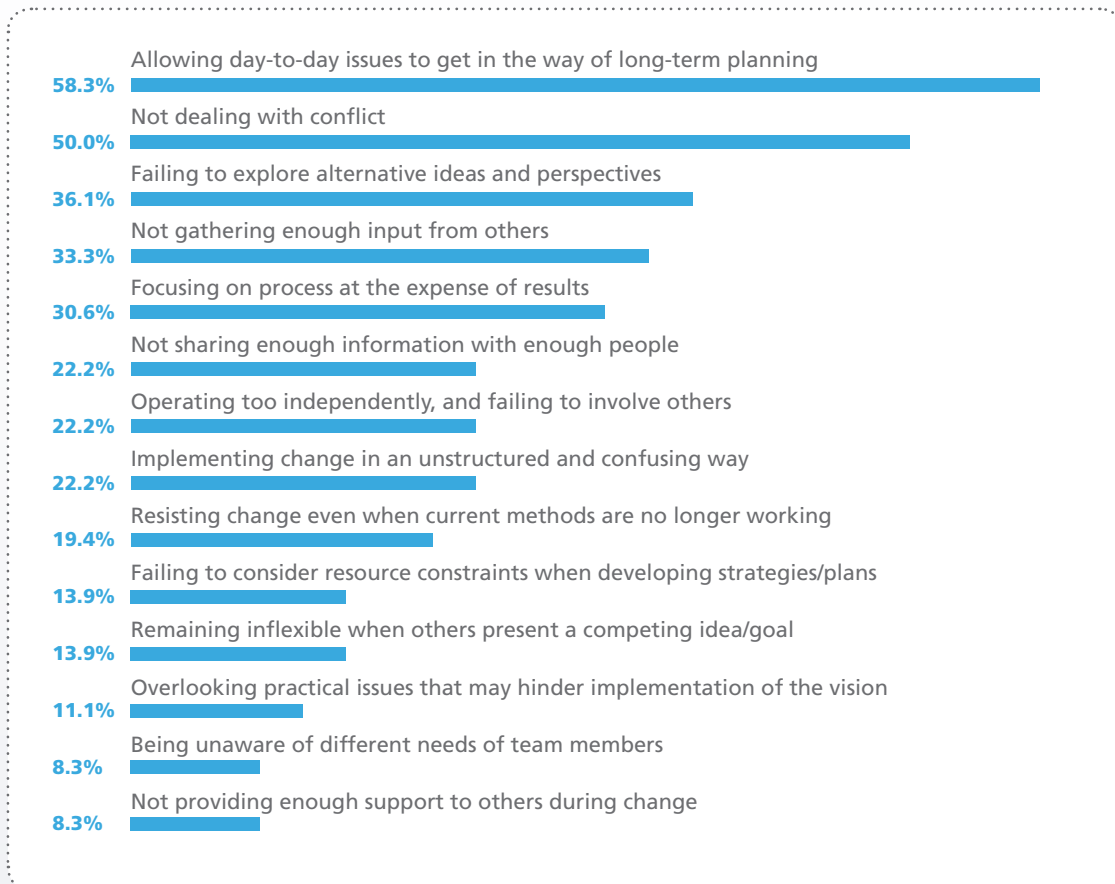
## SF LEADERS – KEY CONTRIBUTIONS



When asked to identify their key contributions, a significant majority of SF leaders selected building relationships (83%), developing others (78%), self-development (75%), and collaborating and promoting teamwork (75%). In alignment with SF's leadership behaviours, these contributions fall within the Relationship Building leadership domain. These findings were not surprising given what we know of the SF preference's natural approach to considering others and striving to provide for group needs.



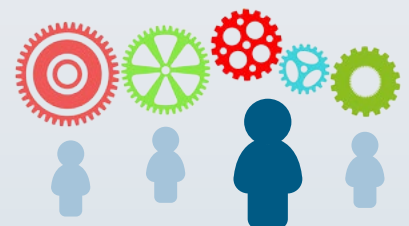
## SF LEADERS – COMMON PITFALLS



### The majority of SF's highlighted two common pitfalls for themselves as leaders:

- Allowing daily issues to get in the way of long-term planning – 58%
- Not dealing with conflict – 50%

These two challenging areas are common blind spots for individuals with SF preferences. As leaders who naturally focus on the present and maintaining positive relationships, SFs may not always recognize the need to step back from their daily work and review their long-term goals, and may also overly rely on avoidance as a technique to deal with conflict.



## SF LEADERS – MOVING FORWARD

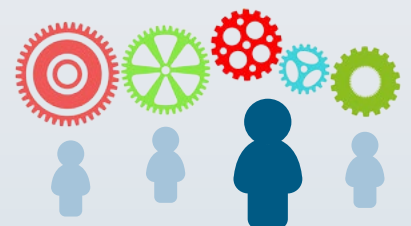
Revolving around the leadership domain of Relationship Building, the contributions of SF leaders include:

- Building relationships and involving people
- Developing supportive and service-oriented work groups
- Meeting the immediate needs of others
- Taking a practical approach to problems

For SFs, focusing on the leadership domains of Strategic Thinking and Executing are likely to be fruitful.

### **Given what we know, SF leaders may need to:**

- Step back from the tasks at hand to consider long-term implications
- Communicate the analytical and objective reasons for their decisions
- Take more time to consider new approaches and look for new opportunities
- Learn how to give difficult feedback and manage conflict



## Intuition-Feeling – “Inspiration for the Future”

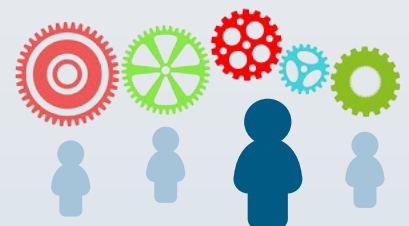


Leaders with preferences for Intuition and Feeling are innately drawn to future possibilities, and empowering people and organizations to reach their full potential. Responses from the NF participants in our study are highly aligned with other research – these individuals seek to inspire and develop others.

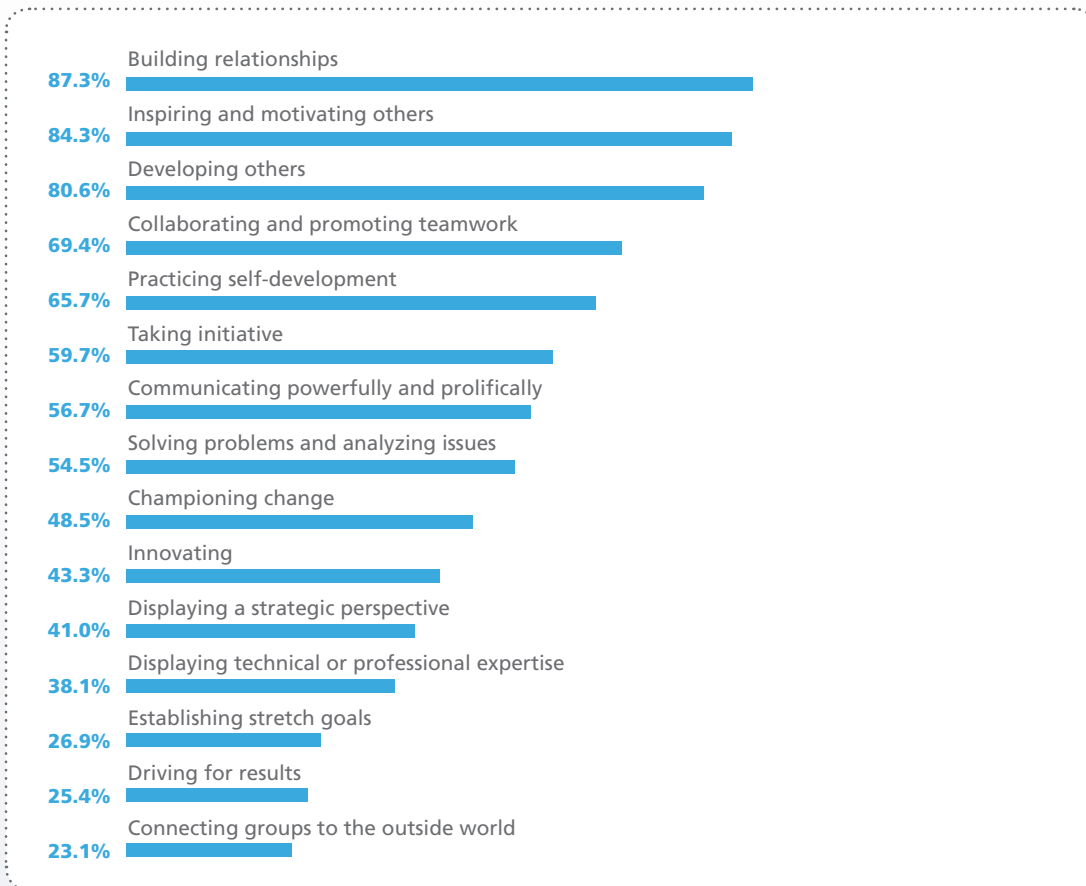
Easier for NF Leaders	More Difficult for NF Leaders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspiring others</li> <li>• Coaching and developing people</li> <li>• Empathizing</li> <li>• Identifying skills and capabilities of others</li> <li>• Focusing on the future</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making tough decisions</li> <li>• Negotiating</li> <li>• Managing Stress</li> <li>• Focusing on the present</li> </ul>

The vast majority of the leadership behaviors which NFs found easy to engage in are related to Relationship Building. Like SFs, NFs are attuned to the needs of those around them; however, NFs were much more likely to report these behaviours against a wider context of inspiring and coaching others, and focusing on the future.

The more difficult behaviours reported by NFs include making tough decisions, negotiating, managing stress and focusing on the present. These are related to the leadership domains of Influence, Execution and Strategic Thinking.

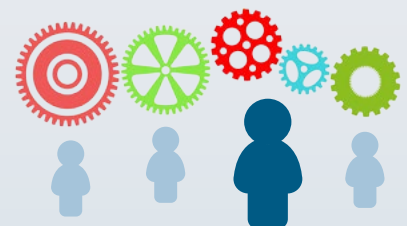


## NF LEADERS – KEY CONTRIBUTIONS



A strong majority of 87% of NF respondents saw their key contribution being their ability to build relationships, and 84% reported that inspiring and motivating others was a key leadership contribution for them as well. Finally, 81% reported developing others was something they frequently brought to the leadership arena. Leaders with NF preferences believe that what they consistently bring to organizations is future oriented development and inspiration of people. This is in stark contrast with their opposites, the STs, who see their main impacts being in the areas of problem solving and taking initiative.

\*Zenger & Folkman (2014). The skills leaders need at every level. Harvard Business Review.



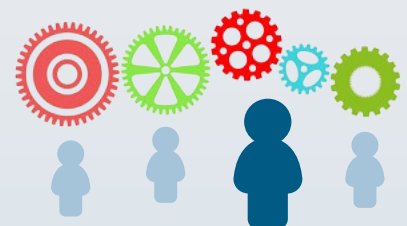
## NF LEADERS – COMMON PITFALLS



### NFs reported three common pitfalls at work:

- Not dealing with conflict – 52%
- Allowing day-to-day issues to get in the way of long-term planning – 49%
- Overlooking practical issues that may hinder implementation of their vision – 48%

Not dealing with conflict and overlooking practical issues in the pursuit of a long-term vision are natural blindspots for people with NF preferences. As leaders who are inherently focused on setting inspirational goals and finding the best in others, dealing with concrete realities and engaging in charged and negative interactions are a behavioural stretch.



## NF LEADERS – MOVING FORWARD

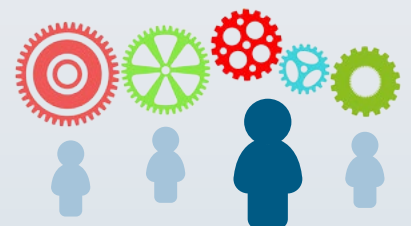
Revolving around the leadership domain of Relationship Building, the contributions of NF leaders include:

- Inspiring and motivating others
- Coaching and developing people
- Identifying the future needs and potential of employees
- Being open to new opportunities

For NFs, focusing on the leadership domains of Influence and Execution are likely to be fruitful.

### NF leaders may need to:

- Pay more attention to the necessary resources and implementation details required to implement their global initiatives
- Learn to say “no,” and stand firm on things that are critical
- Communicate more details and implement action plans





## Intuition-Thinking – “Begin with the End in Mind”

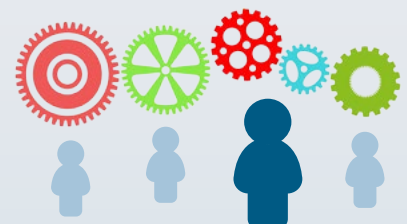


NT Leaders are drawn towards possibilities and what could be, just like their NF colleagues. There is a significant difference however, in where NTs focus their future orientation. For them, they seek out ways to apply new concepts and create new systems to achieve their goals. This was reflected in their responses on the survey.

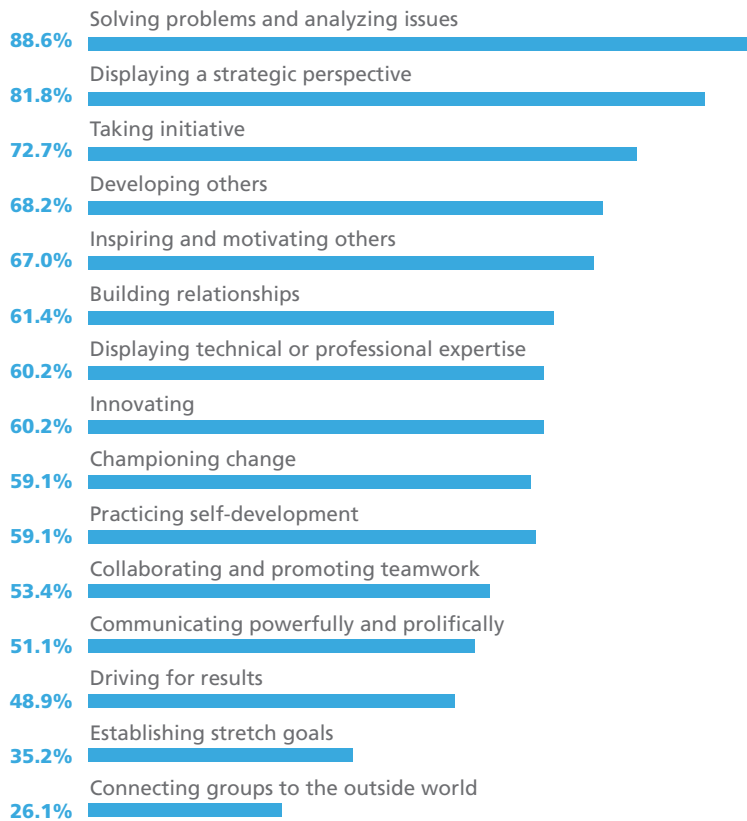
Easier for NT Leaders	More Difficult for NT Leaders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brainstorming</li> <li>• Coaching and developing others</li> <li>• Being analytical</li> <li>• Focusing on the future</li> <li>• Coming up with creative solutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Checking back in on decisions</li> <li>• Networking</li> <li>• Sharing information about yourself</li> </ul>

NTs reported that brainstorming, focusing on the future and coming up with creative solutions were amongst the easiest leadership behaviours for them. Each of these fits in with the Strategic Thinking leadership domain. Given what we know of N and T as preferences in evaluating information and making decisions, these findings are not surprising given their objective focus and long-term emphasis. Similar to STs, NTs also reported that being analytical was easy for them, reflecting the common “T” approach of using logic to solve problems.

More difficult and challenging behaviours for NTs to engage in revolve around following up on decisions and sharing information about themselves. These activities are related to Execution and Relationship Building.



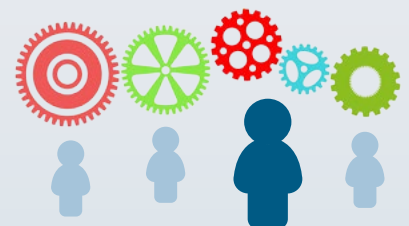
## NT LEADERS – KEY CONTRIBUTIONS



**The majority of leaders with NT preferences reported the following as their key contributions:**

- Solving problems and analyzing issues – 89%
- Displaying a strategic perspective – 82%
- Taking initiative – 73%

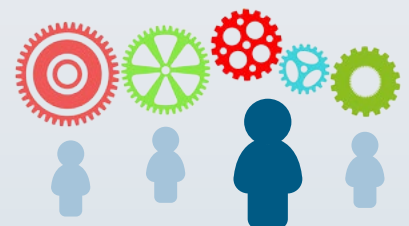
As a group, NTs see themselves as bringing critical analysis, a strategic mindset, and a willingness to take action.



## NT LEADERS – COMMON PITFALLS



Challenges voiced by the NT group include operating too independently (53%), not sharing enough information (46%), and not gathering enough input from others (41%). Each of these pitfalls appear to revolve around NTs willingness to operate independently, seeking only their own counsel. A greater focus on building relationships and engaging others in their tasks could help NTs overcome these challenges.



## NT LEADERS – MOVING FORWARD

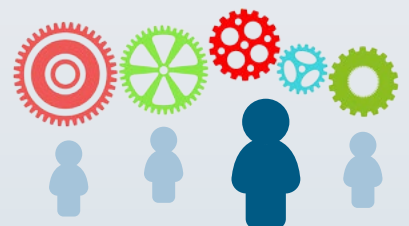
Revolving around the leadership domain of Strategic Thinking, the contributions of NT leaders include:

- Critical analysis of current methods
- Willingness to consider new ideas and try new approaches
- Implementing long-range plans

For NTs, focusing on the leadership domain of Relationship Building is likely to be fruitful.

### NT leaders should try to:

- Check back in on the decisions they make to ensure progress
- Seek out opportunities to personally connect with colleagues and subordinates
- Take time to gather more information and feedback from others
- State things in a simpler and clearer fashion
- Show appreciation for others' contributions



## Type-Alike Challenges

Type can tell us some things, but not all things. In this study, there were some common challenges found amongst all preferences and function pairs.

'Networking' as a leadership behaviour associated with Relationship Building was found to be reportedly difficult for all function pair groups. These types of findings may suggest that there is something inherently challenging to this kind of relationship building, regardless of one's personality type. This has important implications for leadership, especially if all individuals must target and develop this particular skill to be effective. This also provides future directions for understanding exactly why networking may be naturally challenging for everyone.

Additionally, we also observed that all function pairs reported that allowing day to day issues to interfere with long term planning was a common challenge. It appears that avoiding the pull of immediate demands is difficult for everyone. Leaders need to remind themselves to step back and connect the immediate to the long-term, while organizations may need to find ways to empower all leaders to think beyond the here-and-now.

## Summary

As an MBTI practitioner who works with leaders, you have the privilege and opportunity to help them realize their full potential. Effective leaders are not specialists – they must be able to use a variety of behaviours and focus on a wide range of issues. Those who cannot flex their approach, or adjust to meet the needs of others, struggle in the leadership arena.

Who we are, as identified by our personality preferences, influences which essential leadership behaviours come naturally versus those that may require more development. We encourage you to use the information in this report to help leaders become more successful by leveraging their natural talents and addressing gaps in their leadership skill set.

