

ENFPs as Business Leaders: Step Up or Shut Up



The leader is basically doing what is inevitable doing and what needs to be done.

Perhaps you've caught my recent post about the ENFP dark side returning where I talked about my experience being under extreme stress and how that can significantly change the ENFP personality to act like a totally paranoid, different person.

I promised in the video of that post that I would make another one talking about what I learned about feeling controlled, about expressing what we want and, ultimately, how ENFPs function as leaders within business, within partnerships – and I'm sure it applies to sports, adventures, and world travel as well.

ENFP and INTJ Partnership: Campaigner and Architect Dream Team?

I was recently in Ukraine on a business partnership mission, looking at investments.

In this situation, we have a new partnership between me, an ENFP, and a friend of mine who is an INTJ or the so-called Architect personality type.

In theory, even though very different types of personalities, INTJ and ENFP are the perfect, compatible match. This is true both for business partnerships, but also in terms of ENFP and

INTJ relationship compatibility. And, truthfully, I think that might be the case the more and more this partnership developed and I see how it can really work together.

But during the early part of this trip, which was really the start of this partnership, and a chance to test things out, we also had some really poor Airbnb experiences – a terrible, terrible combination of lack of sleep, long days and kind of stressful situations that push people to the limit. It is probably a good thing that this happened at the beginning.

During this time, I started to feel like I had no control, like I was being pushed in a direction that I didn't necessarily want to go in. I was feeling like:

“Wait, I'm having to do all these things that I don't want to do. I feel like I'm being controlled.”

Fortunately, I had a big realization about what was really happening.

We had a mission we were there to accomplish. We had to get things done and I was not taking a leadership role. I was not stepping up with a plan. I was not saying:

“Here's what we should do today. Here's what we need to get done.”

And that's something I often can do but in this case, my INTJ friend and business partner is a lot more experienced in the area we're working in. So I was defaulting to him and sort of sitting back and I wasn't taking charge, nor was I even really expressing myself as much as I could.

I found myself kind of taking the backseat, occasionally expressing opinions, but I wouldn't speak strongly for something I wanted.

I wasn't taking charge and then I felt like I was being controlled in this really backseat position.

How Does an ENFP Work as a Leader

What I did was reflecting on what was actually said, and truthfully, I wasn't expressing what I wanted. So how would I get what I wanted? Or how would I at least feel heard and like I had some control of where we were going with this partnership if I wasn't expressing that my INTJ partner?

Maybe this is just me. Maybe this is not one of the ENFP traits. I have a feeling it is, though.

Ultimately, what I realized is a lot of the thoughts were going on in my head not being expressed out loud.

A lot more was happening within my intuition, which in some cases actually turned out to be right.

The extroverted intuition is one of the ENFP characteristics that allows us to take in a lot of information and learn from a new situation like, say, going to Ukraine to make an investment.

Because of this we can see patterns really quickly, figure things out, and, therefore, can make great leaders, whether as ENFP business owners and entrepreneurs or within more corporate ENFP jobs, as a boss or a team leader.

And I was doing that unconsciously, and sort of figuring some things out, but I wasn't expressing them. I wasn't articulating or leading the way – and that's what ENFP as leader should do!

So my ENFP intuition was trying to pull me one way, while I was expressing nothing, but the situation and my INTJ partner were kind of going the other way.

And naturally, I had this mound of stress, I felt totally out of control. It was not a pleasant experience.

ENFP Career Partners: Thinking vs Feeling Leadership Styles

My big takeaway and why this was a really, really positive experience was realizing that us ENFPs must learn how to express ourselves.

As ENFPs we don't like to necessarily control people and we don't like to be controlled. I think most of us can agree that's the case, right?

We don't have this power fixation, where we want to rule over 80 people. But we definitely don't want to be one of the 80 people being ruled over.

So we have to learn how to say what we want and how to lead – or perhaps lead within a partnership – and find that right balance where we can express ourselves, say what we want so that we don't feel controlled, and also be fair to the other person.

It's not fair for the people who end up having to partner and work with us, who have all this intuition inside, and we end up not sharing it. We have all these thoughts in our head we don't really put out there and then we expect them to read our mind.

Maybe we're pretty good at reading other people's minds, but hopefully, your partnership is not two ENFPs, and that there's some balance there.

The types that we often partner well with are not necessarily as intuitive and good at reading other people. It's the whole thinking vs feeling thing within our MBTI function stacks and personality profiles.

They are maybe more logically oriented and may look at things in more of a “Hey, this is what you said, what am I supposed to do?” basis, so an ENFP at work should take care to figure out different leadership styles.

What Should I Do?! – ENFP Leader Advice

I couldn't be happier that this experience happened because it resulted in a few other important insights on ENFP communication skills.

Another thing along the lines of clear communication is guessing what people mean, especially if it's in text, but even if it's shared live.

There were a few times where I made assumptions about what other people meant that, to me, were very clear.

They said something.

I made the assumption about what it meant, maybe even why they did it, or why they said it.

Then I use that to form judgments...and it turns out that the original judgment was not correct.

So when it comes to clear communication, the best ENFP advice I have is that it's really important not only that we learn to express ourselves, but also learn to ask more questions.

I realized that I held back on perhaps interrogating people and getting really clear and say:

“Wait, what do you mean? Wait, let's clarify that. Can we put that in writing to ensure we both mean the same thing?”

These are all things I should have done, but I didn't.

I didn't want to feel like I was untrusting or that I was trying to interrogate someone, so I kind of went with the flow more, instead of taking the time to really clarify, which would have avoided a lot of problems after.

We should do this even though it might go against our ENFP personality type description of being a bit more laid back or going with the flow. We also tend to be a bit conflict-avoidant, where we don't really want to like butt heads with someone, so we keep things inside.

All these things that can make us usually have warm relationships, usually be easy to get along with, in more intense situations or professional partnerships, I think we have to learn how to practice better communication and being a better ENFP leader.

We should learn to express our intuition, learn to say what we want and what we think, and also clarify with other people.

And maybe having a little more conflict and a little more direct, uncomfortable conversations early to avoid a really uncomfortable conversation later, as this was all being discussed and hashed out between me and my INTJ partner.

One of the quotes he shared, which I cannot remember exactly how it went, and I can't get hold of him right now, but essentially was that:

People often mistake the actions taken as those of the leader when, really, the leader is basically doing what is inevitable doing and what needs to be done.

Basically, he was looking at what we have to do, he wasn't in his mind making decisions, and he's saying:

“This is what we have to do to get to our goal. Let's do it.”

It wasn't necessarily any one person's decision.

I think it was a really good way of thinking about it because it goes back to that – as ENFPs if we sit back and go with the flow, we can't blame someone else and where that flow takes us, that flow *is happening*.

Maybe that was just the way events would go if we don't step up and change them.

So my big takeaway from this whole experience is to get more clear on the things I want to, articulate it earlier and perhaps more accurately, and ultimately not to blame anyone else for any situation I end up in if I did not take my own action to try to change that situation or mold it the way I wanted to go.

Those are some more of my insights from one heck of an interesting couple of weeks on my business trip in Ukraine with my INTJ business partner.

Let me know in the comments:

Have you ever been in any similar situations where, as an ENFP, you didn't clearly express yourself and your intuition completely took over? What did you do?

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