Four Personality Types: Urchin, Shark, Whale, & Dolphin

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While there are generally 4 types of personalities, all of us have a little bit of each type in us. Yet, one type is our more dominant way of being.

Why is knowing personality traits important? It helps us understand, interact, and communicate with each other better.

If you are in business – this is a great way to build relationships and identify with your audience and your customers. Understanding why someone may act or respond a certain way – helps you to relate to them, build rapport, and respond accordingly for the most effective results.

In the workplace – learning personality traits is highly effective in helping teams work together effectively. Having teams take a personality trait test combined with a brief primer on the 4 personality types will help you understand and relate to each other better.

Wouldn’t it be helpful to understand how to respond to the manager in the next office who can’t ever find his presentations or the employee in the next cube who asks a million questions that seems totally unnecessary to you?
Urchin

The picture on the side implies a prickly personality. In some ways...The Urchin personality type can come across as prickly because they tend not to be extroverts and are not overly emotional, often seeming serious and distant.

The Urchin loves loves loves information. They get all warm and fuzzy (but would never tell you that) over facts, rules, regulations and documentation. They ask a TON of questions and analyze E-V-E-R-Y-T-H-I-N-G!

The Urchin typically doesn’t sit idle. They feel there is always something to be done. They can get agitated and annoyed when they feel their time or money is being wasted.

When going out to eat with an Urchin – expect them to either order the same dish they always order (it’s safe) or to peruse the menu at length and ask for various substitutions.

Urchins need to read and investigate everything before making a decision. They prefer answers in writing. They are highly detail oriented. These are the people who will check for typos on a website and call the company to let them know! Ha!

How does an Urchin respond when asked questions about themselves? The Urchin will typically respond to a question about themselves with a question (“why are you asking?” or “what do you mean by that?” or “what relevance does that have?”).

They are very uncomfortable opening up and talking about themselves. The Urchin is a control freak and prefers to be the questioner. They are
closed, cautious, and careful. They don’t respond well when people are overly emotional.

**What does an Urchin drive?** Typically something well tested, long lasting (they don’t believe in spending money on new cars every two years), good on gas mileage and repairs, and safe. The Urchin may have read every Consumer Report, Bluebook and Carfax on a vehicle before purchase. Color isn’t the major concern in a vehicle.

**Their workspace on the job?** One word…empty 😞. Empty or extremely limited of anything personal. They don’t believe in sharing personal information with outsiders and are skeptical of those who attempt to get too close personally. They believe in keeping business, business and personal, personal.

**How do they dress?** Neat. Well groomed. Classy. Clothes in their closet coordinate – nothing too extreme or way off the color chart from the rest of the items. An extreme Urchin typically is money conscious so spending excessive amounts of money on clothing may cause them to squirm. However, the Urchin believes in value for their money so if they find an Armani suit worth the money and it will last long – they will buy it. They are typically not flashy individuals or those who flaunt themselves so you may not easily recognize the expense in the clothing.

**Their weaknesses?** They spend a really long time making decisions. They tend to procrastinate, can be very critical of others, strive for perfection in everything (despite it never being attainable) and some often struggle with depression and insecurity. They may settle for what’s practical and “realistic” versus going for their big dreams.

Do you know an Urchin? Perhaps you are an Urchin? Can you identify with the Urchin’s traits? Of course these are generalized traits and there are of course many exceptions. The characteristics listed here are intended to be very general to provide a definitive difference between them.
Dolphin

Where’s the Party At??

Our Dolphin friends are the life of the party! To say they are extroverts are an understatement – these are your social butterflies. Serious? Bah!!! No time for that! Life is too short! The Dolphin believes everyone should be be free and enjoy life!

The Dolphin loves to have FUN FUN FUN! They get all warm and fuzzy about meeting new people, talking to everyone about anything, and are always in the know about something.

Much like the Urchin, the Dolphin typically doesn’t sit idle. They feel there is always something to be done. While the Urchin wants to check tasks off a list – The Dolphin wants to get out there and just see where the day takes them….find the fun and exciting things life has to offer.

When going out to eat with a Dolphin – expect them to flip flop between several choices of entrees, go on a tangent discussing lots of other topics before making their final decision. They are willing to try anything new and the more visually appealing the dish – the better.

Dolphins are more impulsive and will make decisions based on feeling. Too many facts, figures or details bore them. They typically make quick decisions and will ask others for their opinion. These are your show stoppers. They are charismatic and can build great teams because people like them and enjoy being around them.

How does a Dolphin respond when asked questions about themselves? They will go on-and-on-and-on about themselves…
what they love...what they enjoy...what they don’t love or enjoy and why. Think Chatty-Cathy! They have expressive faces and voices.

**What does a Dolphin drive?** Anything they like so long as it fits their personality and in their favorite color. You know the person who drives the bright yellow VW Bug with the flower top on their antenna and colorful seat covers? Or the person with the big flashy blue Mercedes with the customized plate? Dolphin.

**Their workspace on the job?** You will know a Dolphin by their workspace. Lots and Lots of stuff. Lots of colors. Lots of personal items. Lots of souvenirs. Lots of pictures. They believe their workspace is a reflection of their fun personality and is like being at home for them so everything is on display. They may have their own coffee machine, and snacks/candy in case you drop by to sit for a bit.

**How do they dress?** Colorful. Some like to match different patterns (think plaid and flowers – LOL!). They aren’t afraid to match orange shoes with an orange shirt. They aren’t afraid to spend money on their clothes. Remember these people live life to the fullest – so spare no expense!

**Their weaknesses?** They may come across as flighty, disorganized, ditzy and self centered. They are not. They truly love people and want to be liked. They are quick decision makers so they may not always make the best decisions. They believe in the big dream and may not be willing to stay focused on the mundane tasks required to reach their dreams.
Whale

Can We All Just Get Along?? The Whale personality type are the most like able people and make the very best friends. They are reliable, honest, and great listeners. They are the most compassionate of the personality types and will seek to comfort others. They seek approval and friendship and just want things to go nicely and calmly. They seek to maintain order and consistency.

The Whale loves to help and serve others. They much prefer to be in the background than the center of attention like the Dolphin. They get all warm and fuzzy about giving gifts and making people smile. They seek appreciation, respect, and acceptance from others.

The Whale is calm, relaxed, patient, predictable, stable, consistent, accurate, and thorough. They are your task masters. They will get the job done. They are the people you have manage committees. They will run through a brick wall to please those they work for as long as there is appreciation and admiration for them in the end.

When going out to eat with a Whale – expect them to ask for opinions of the others at the table and be indecisive until someone else helps them make a decision. Or they may simply just order what someone else that they respect is ordering.

Whales are rarely impulsive and need to get someone else’s approval or opinion before they make a decision. Once they make a decision – they are hard to change or move because they are motivated by security.
How does a Whale respond when asked questions about themselves? They will speak about everything and everyone other than themselves. They will speak of their good life – their family and friends and the organizations and committees they belong to. They will speak of the great work someone else is doing and how they support that person. They rarely speak directly of themselves.

What does a Whale drive? Much like the Urchin – something safe, however the Whale doesn’t care about car reviews. The Whale may drive something given to them by someone else, or something their spouse picked out. It’s pretty much – whatever works.

Their workspace on the job? The Whale will have lots of pictures of people they care about. They may have pictures of other people’s children that have been given to them. Their workspace will include things that represent security to them. They will have certificates representing their long years of service (since they seek job security and longevity). They are typically organized and net and shirk disorder.

How do they dress? Comfortable. Not much deviation in their style. They pick what is comfortable for them and stick with it.

Their weaknesses? Since they love helping others almost to a fault, they leave themselves open to be taken advantage by others who don’t have the best intentions. They tend to “go along to get along”.

They believe in someone else’s big dream and may sacrifice their own desires for others. They prefer a slower, easy pace which may frustrate the people in their lives. They are resistant to change which presents some challenges for them in career and in life.

Do you know a Whale? Perhaps you are a Whale? Can you identify with the Whale’s traits? Of course these are generalized traits and there are of course many exceptions. The characteristics listed here are intended to be very general to provide a definitive difference between them.
There are Sharks In the Water!

Ever heard that term? This is the most aggressive personality type. They can be described as demanding, forceful, strong willed, driving, determined, ambitious, and pioneering. You either love them or your hate them. They don’t seek approval from others because they are independent and confident. They seek action and success in whatever they are pursuing.

The Shark are your leaders, over achievers and top producers. They get all warm and fuzzy about conquering their latest goal and winning. They admire and respect strength and results. They walk with confidence and authority. They are the ultimate control freaks.

Like the Whale, they will get the job done. However, they are the drivers of tasks, visionaries, and focused on results. Failure is not an option and they expect excellence from themselves and everyone around them. They get bored by routine and require independence and freedom.

When going out to eat with a Shark – expect them to ask for something not on the menu. LOL! They may also pick the most expensive or eccentric item on the menu. They will dominate the table conversation in between answering their cell and texting.

Like the Urchin – Sharks need information to make decisions – however they don’t revel in the details. Details are to be delegated….just get to the “bottom line”. When they decide to move forward on something – it is given their focus and attention as though it is something to be conquered.

How does a Shark respond when asked questions about
themselves? They will speak about everything they’ve accomplished, their network of people, their awards, who they know in powerful positions, what they own and where they vacation. They will speak of their latest project in much bravado – typically rarely speaking of family and friends which is private to them.

What does a Shark drive? The Shark is bold and loves power and authority. Their cars will reflect that. Think Big Black SUV or Sophisticated White Lexus or something along those lines. If the Shark really has money…think Maserati or Bentley.

Their workspace on the job? The Shark thrives on power and authority. Expect their workspace to be furnished with the best furniture with all the necessary amenities. The guest chairs won’t be comfortable because they don’t want you to hang around too long.

How do they dress? Expensive. Labels. The best fabrics. They look like power and money.

Their weaknesses? If you appear weak or unsure of yourself – a Shark will eat you alive. They can hurt feelings and can appear to care less. They can be the most difficult people to get along with. They can be impatient and appear distant, cold, and insensitive.

They love the fast pace and can steamroll in certain situations. Sharks are like a “Bull in a China Shop”. They may have trouble putting aside the need to be right, the need to achieve, the need to conquer the latest challenge.

They typically are not good at recognizing others feelings and needs because they are focused on the end game…achieving their goals.

Do you know a Shark? Perhaps you are a Shark? Of course this entire series has included generalized traits and there are of course many exceptions. The characteristics listed here are intended to be very general to provide a definitive difference between them.