# Why Jung still matters

Swiss psychologist Carl Jung's ideas have become such an integral part of business that many don't even realise they were his in the first place. From branding to psychometric testing, from the meaning of work to the untapped potential of older people, Jung was there first. MARK VERNON examines his legacy

This month marks the 50th anniversary of the death of Carl Jung, the father of modern analytical psychology. Second only to Freud in terms of his importance as a psychologist of the 20th century, Jung invented concepts such as the extroverted and introverted personality types. He is the greatest theoriser of that frequent workplace experience, the midlife crisis, and also developed more controversial notions such as that of archetypes.

Born on 26 July 1875 in the village of Kesswil in northern Switzerland, Jung studied medicine at the University of Basel and served as an army doctor during WWI. Fascinated by the nature and function of the unconscious mind, he was at first heavily influenced by Freud, but the two fell out over Jung's conception of a shared and heritable 'collective unconscious'. A prolific writer, after his death on 6 June 1961 his collected works amounted to some 19 volumes.

Jung's ideas, like Freud's, have been sifted for competitive advantage in the business world. 'His system has helped many corporations understand who they are, what their core identities are and how they should portray themselves to the wider public,' says Marc Gobé, author of *Emotional Branding*. 'It has helped designers create ideas based on a better understanding of people's dreams and emotions.'

But advocates of Jungian analytical psychology believe that his legacy is still underexploited. He has much more to say, not least to a world that is increasingly concerned with questions of value, balance and meaning. So, 50 years on, here's our analysis of his legacy to the worlds of work and business, and a look at where his ideas might go from here.

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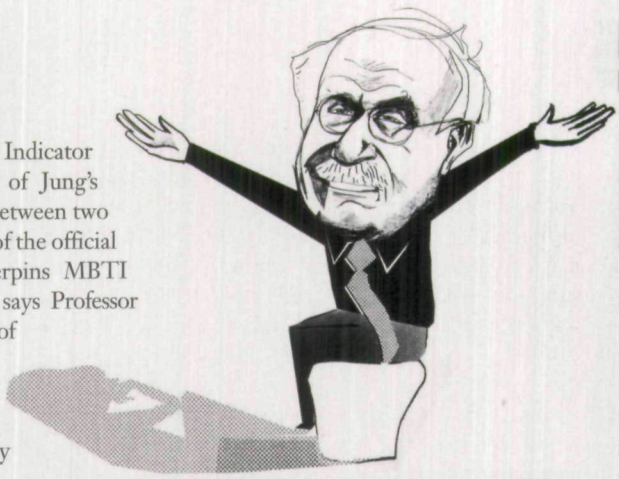
Forever Jung: the eminent psychologst's fascination with connecting people's inner and outer worlds strikes a chord with the contemporary interest in work/life balance

## MBTI



The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is the best-known part of Jung's work in business today. Between two and three million copies of the official questionnaire that underpins MBTI are sold each year and, says Professor Rowan Bayne, author of *Psychological Types at Work*, it's the most popular non-clinical measure of personality type in the world.

It was developed by the psychologist Isabel Myers from Jung's 1921 publication, *Psychological Types*. She said she was seeking to apply Jung's least 'abstruse' ideas. It is in this work that Jung formulates extrovert and introvert personality preferences, among others. Roughly speaking, extroverts gain energy when they engage with the outside world and become flat when left too long on their own; whereas introverts find it draining to engage with the outside world and need time to recharge on their own.

Jung also described the ways different individuals prefer to receive information about the world around them – whether primarily through their senses or by deploying their intuition. He also explored how they tend to process the information they've received – in a more thinking, rational mode or in a more feeling and evaluative mode. The MBTI questionnaire identifies which set of preferences are possessed by the person concerned, and these insights can then be applied in a variety of contexts, from shaping career choice to building rounded teams.

Professor Bayne puts the success of MBTI down to a number of factors. 'People do recognise themselves in the types,' he says. 'They understand something about themselves and others, particularly those whom they find difficult, and feel at peace as a result.' This is to say that MBTI works, at least when it comes to the diversity of preferences people have. 'The evidence for the validity of MBTI theory is substantial, in spite of what you can read on the internet,' continues Bayne. 'The questionnaire has been widely researched too and shows good links between, say, type and shaping a career.'

But that is not to say MBTI is without its risks. They are mostly associated with the way it's used. For example, if MBTI forces someone into a stereotypical corner, then that ignores the fact that personality preferences are not absolute and fixed, but varied and evolving. 'I contain multitudes,' as Walt Whitman put it. The evidential support for MBTI is also not so strong when it comes to type development, that part of the theory which describes the way that different preferences interact with one another. This is partly because type development is much harder to test, though Professor Bayne notes that new studies are making inroads into this problem. Although the future of MBTI looks secure, these results will be interesting to watch.

## BRANDING

Second on the list, in terms of widespread practice, comes the theory Jung brings to the understanding of brands and consumer behaviour. At the heart of his insights lie his particular understanding of the unconscious.

Freud believed that the unconscious is a kind of mental repository for thoughts, desires and images that are forbidden in some way. When applied to brands, Freudian-based marketing plays with these prohibitions. Hence, when Edward Bernays brought Freud's ideas to the US in the 1920s, he created a PR campaign for a cigarette brand by breaking the taboo of women smoking in public. He labelled the cigarettes 'torches of freedom' and an association between smoking and liberty was sealed.

Jung's idea of the unconscious contains different elements, in particular the notion of archetypes. The theory of archetypes is complex and contested, but, broadly speaking, archetypes are elementary ideas, feelings, fantasies and visions that seem constant and frequently re-emerge across different times and places.

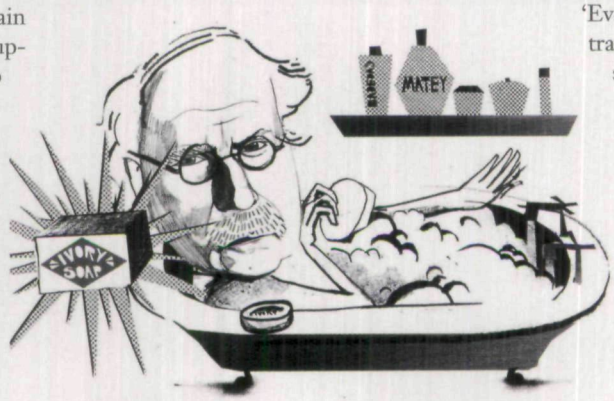
'For example, cleansing rituals have usually signified more than physical cleanliness,' explain Margaret Mark and Carol Pearson in their book *The Hero and The Outlaw*. 'They also symbolise the removal of sin or shame. Ivory soap has drawn from this well. Ivory is not just about getting clean; it is about renewal, purity and innocence.'

Such associations are, of course, irrational. But they are all the more powerful for that. The Jungian approach to a marketing campaign will try to understand these hidden meanings and capitalise on them.

'Archetypes are not stereotypes,' adds Massi Tedeschi, a consultant who deploys Jungian ideas. 'They are more complex, having personalities and shadows too.' And this can yield further important information for brand managers. The Jungian concept of the shadow, for example, is that every positive association has a negative association too, and brand managers need to be cognisant of both dimensions.

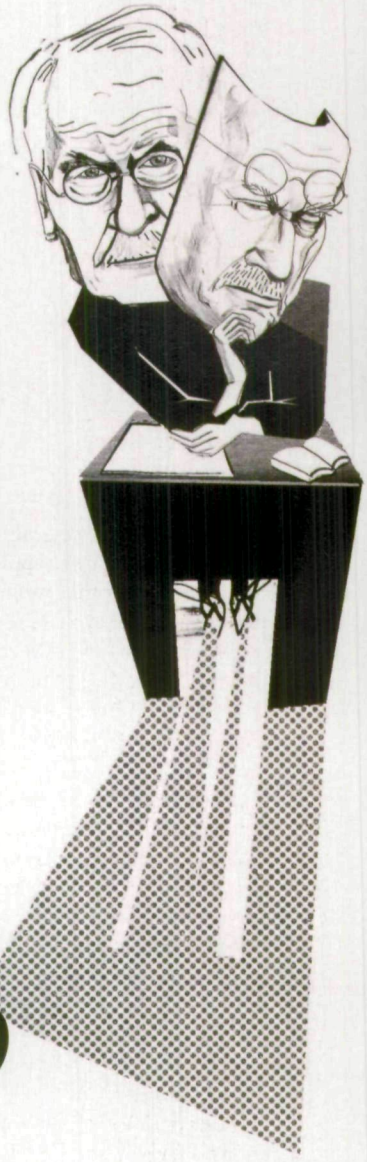
For example, Nike draws on the hero archetype, the individual who through trials and tribulations is ultimately victorious. Consumers are grabbed by the Nike swoosh because they desire such qualities However, in the late 1990s, Nike was accused of using child labour. The brand's reputation was at stake and a Jungian perspective helps reveal just how critical a time this was for the company. Having drawn so successfully on the positive associations of the hero, Nike was now faced with the shadow side of its brand, resonating equally powerfully with its public.

'Every archetype has such as trap,' explain Mark and Pearson. 'To the degree that you fully understand the archetype that fuels your own organisation's efforts, you can guard against its negative potential and save yourself from such brand-damaging publicity.'




Ellie Foreman-Peck

# THE MEANING OF WORK



It has become commonplace to note that people seek meaning from their work, not just a source of income. 'Work seems to be essential to our identity,' says Lars Svendsen, author of *Work: The Art of Living*. 'When we read someone's obituary, work is usually prominent in the description of their life. If we meet someone at a party and hear that he or she is a psychologist, cashier, musician, fire-fighter or investment banker, our perception of that person will inevitably be shaped by their profession.'

However, it's also noted that work can fail to deliver meaning in the complete way that individuals hope it will. 'We change jobs at an increasing rate,' continues Svendsen. 'We are extremely concerned with finding the right job. The idea is that a job can be right or wrong for you, depending on the sort of person you are.' So why is it that work never quite delivers the self-realisation we seek from it?

Jung's idea of the persona is helpful here. The word comes from the ancient Greek for mask, and refers to the masks that actors wore in the theatre. Our persona is, therefore, the mask we wear when we are on stage – such as when we are at work. It allows us to play a part and deliver what is required of us, and that is fulfilling. But masks conceal as well. And therein lies the tension inherent in finding meaning at work.

'There is always some element of pretence about the persona, for it is a kind of shop window in which we like to display our best wares,' suggests Anthony Stevens, author of *Jung: A Very Short Introduction*. 'One might think of it as a public relations expert employed by the ego to ensure that people will think well of us.' To put it another way, others will make inferences about who we are on the basis of what we do for a living, and yet we might not be such a person at all.

And there's a further danger. We can become too identified with our persona, and so lose touch with other parts of ourselves.

'Nobody can simply leave their working self at work and not to some extent bring it with them to the other parts of their life,' explains Svendsen. 'Of course, not everyone identifies with his job to an equal degree. For some people it is their main source of identity, whereas others' identities are based more on their relations to friends, family or a hobby.'

But the lesson is that individuals who turn to work for a complete sense of themselves are likely, at some point, to become frustrated. This is commonly referred to as having a 'midlife crisis' – a fourth aspect of life on which Jung had much to say (see below).

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## MIDLIFE CRISIS

Jung believed that the first half of a person's life would typically be devoted to establishing his or her place in the world. For most, that will be pursued via the development of a career, providing for their family, and achieving various business goals. However, once people have found their place in the world, Jung believed that other concerns are likely to come to the fore. In particular, in the second half of life they are likely to become preoccupied with more ethical or spiritual answers to questions of meaning, purpose and fulfilment.

The transition between the two is often precipitated by a midlife crisis. Examples of midlife crises in the business world are abundant. The manager who splashes out on a Fender for the office or Ferrari for the garage. The happily married executive who has an affair with a junior colleague. What they seek is what these things and experiences stand for, namely a new mode of self-expression or a fresh start.

'The busy, successful man of affairs is so intent on his pursuit of wealth and power that he has no time to give to the cultivation of his inner life,' explains Anthony Storr in his

book *Jung* (we might add that successful women of affairs face similar issues). Power-seekers realise that they need to correct their one-sided development. Is there not more to life than success, they now ask? Jung called this individuation.

'It is hard to exactly explain the individuation process, since it is something very personal and includes countless variants. Based on my experience, I would describe it as the harder walk of life,' observes Stefan Boëthius of coaching business ISAP Zurich, where he has developed a programme of executive coaching based on Jungian psychology. 'The value of the individuation process lies in its inherent meaning for the person concerned. This has little to do with feeling happy in the common sense, but rather with feeling alive, content, and fulfilled.'

That said, midlife crises are risky times. When business leaders break down, it represents a significant danger for the whole organisation. Their performance as a leader is likely to be affected – manifesting as being distracted or as a loss of drive. They may become increasingly dissatisfied, even bitter, and take it out on those around them. 'Other managers, on the contrary, are able to keep their sense of humour and demonstrate empathy and appreciation,' Boëthius continues. 'They seem to have grown as a person while being successful, or their success did not influence their human qualities in a negative way. This must be due to the fact that they were able to keep their own personal development going.'

## AGEING POPULATION

In the western world, older people are becoming more numerous. George Moschis, author of *Marketing to Older Consumers*, explains that businesses have recognised the value of these older populations to them. What they lack, though, is sophistication when interacting with older people. 'The decision-maker interested in gathering information to assist in evaluating various strategic options is likely to discover that existing knowledge about the mature market and strategies for marketing to older adults is highly disorganised; that there is a lack of understanding as to why some strategies work and others do not; and that data is misinterpreted or improperly used.'

Once again, Jung has insights that could be key. Unlike many psychologists, he was very interested in older people. Freud, in contrast, refused to treat middle-aged people, believing psychology is interested only in the first half of life. But Jung thought middle age was precisely when life gets interesting. 'A human being would certainly not grow to be 70 or 80 years old if this longevity had no meaning for the species,' he observed. 'The afternoon of life must have a significance of its own and cannot be merely a pitiful appendage of life's morning.' So what might its significance be?

The answer is found with individuation. Such people, having got over their midlife crisis, are balanced and have a rounded personality, and are contented with their lot. 'Well individuated older people are, and always have been, the repositories of wisdom, for they have had time to reflect, to integrate all they have learned,' says Anthony Stevens.

They are, in fact, widely celebrated. We talk of having 'national treasures', individuals from Ann Widdecombe to David Attenborough. Or they are figures called upon to exercise what might be described as a prophet role to comment on current affairs and conundrums – individuals ranging from Germaine Greer to Desmond Tutu. They tend to see things in the round, even if they were quite extreme in their youth. They will speak of symbols and insights, rather than solutions and actions, being more comfortable with life's uncertainties. In terms of Jung's archetypes, this to talk about the sage. The associated brands should embody learning, growth, self-understanding and autonomy. It is such characteristics that marketing professionals need to take into account when engaging older populations.

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Similar reflections are helpful for companies deciding how best to reach and deploy silvertop employees too. On the one hand, Jung challenges stereotypes: older people do not start 'winding down', but, recharged with a new zest for life, may actually be 'rewound up', all the better for their hoilstic perspective. And, on the other hand, employers will do well when they are able to give full rein to that senior energy. In place of youthful ambition they will find seasoned experience, and the older person's mentoring can complement the younger person's enthusiasm very well.

Jung was fascinated with how the inner and outer worlds of individuals do, and don't, connect. When they do, he concluded, people find meaning and life goes well. It's striking that many modern, progressive businesses are asking similar questions of themselves. Jung helps us to better understand what's at stake. **mt**

*Further reading:*
**Jung: A Biography,** *Deirdre Bair (Little, Brown, 2003)*
**Psychological Types,** *CG Jung (Routledge, 1992)*
**Psychology of the Unconscious,** *CG Jung (Forgotten Books, 2010)*