

SCENE 6

Career Man visits a career coach

When Bruce commissioned this story I doubt he gave too much thought to where it might lead. He's about to find out. I'm in his office looking at him across his desk, about to do something I've never done in my four and a half years at *Men's Health*. Bruce looks back at me, a slightly quizzical look in his eye, perhaps sensing that this isn't going to be like one of our normal chats. Maybe he's just wondering what the hell I'm doing here. The answer is my homework.

Until now, I've been the kind of employee who often looked out of the office window and wondered how I got here. Good fortune and hard work have certainly played their part, but while my cards have been good so far, I know I could play them better. If I want to move forward in my career, I'll have to.

With that in mind I book a "career check-up" offered by Maxcoaching (maxcoaching.com.au) in Sydney. My "coach" is Jane Lowder, an attractive, professional-looking woman who I'm pleased to say neither talks, nor acts, like Mick Malthouse or Craig Bellamy.

Jane thinks it's a good idea to see whether I'm actually suited to my

chosen profession by having me sit the famous Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) test (see Get Psyched, right). Based on my results, I am classified as I (Introverted), N (Intuition), F (Feeling), J (Judging), or an INFJ. People like me are typically reflective, imaginative, caring and idealistic.

We're drawn to work tasks that involve helping others grow and we're at home in our inner world. As I quietly reflect on this description, I have to admit

some of it rings true. Some of it, though, makes me wonder if I should enter next year's Miss World contest.

According to the career report on INFJs, the most attractive

jobs for me are teacher, librarian and school administrator. As I begin to imagine a parallel universe where I'm happily chasing overdue library books, Jane informs me that the next most attractive job family includes artist, coach, musician and reporter. I look at Jane with some relief. "Well done, Ben," she says. "You're in a career that suits you."

Our next step is to start setting some goals. Unlike many of Jane's clients, who aren't happy with their career choice, my only real gripe

is remuneration. While I long ago accepted that I'm destined to write more stories than I ever will massive cheques, I'd still like to be a bit closer to what my mates in finance and engineering are on.

Next we canvass my two- and five-year goals and dreams – to improve my writing skills, assume more responsibility in the office and maybe one day have a stab at writing a novel/screenplay. Jane's furiously scribbling all this down and I'm almost afraid to open my mouth, lest she set me more assignments.

It turns out to be worth it, though, because as the weeks pass and I make a start on some of these goals, I feel a growing sense of purpose and control over where I'm heading. Sure, some of them will take time, but with Jane asking me for regular progress reports, there's nowhere to hide if I don't do my homework.

Which brings us back to Bruce's office. I briefly consider what Jane will say if I don't go through with this. It's unlikely she'll have me drop and give her 50, but I don't want to let her, or myself, down. Taking a deep breath so that the air flows into my diaphragm, I trace the outline of the "C" that I can feel through my shirt. Then keeping my hands clasped neatly in front of me, I muster my most powerful, resonant voice. "Bruce," I say confidently, "I'd like a pay rise." **MH**

GET PSYCHED
Based on Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung's personality theory, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is a 91-question multiple-choice test that aims to identify your habitual practices in four areas of life: extraversion/introversion – the direction of your energy and attention; sensing/intuition – the way you like to take in information; thinking/feeling – the way you make decisions; judging/perceiving – how you deal with the outer world. This information is then used to ascertain your psychological preferences by categorising you into one of 16 different personality types. For more information, log onto myersbriggs.org.

While my cards have been good so far, I know I could play them better

GET YOUR CAREER IN SHAPE

Know what you want. "Coaching is goal-oriented," says career coach Jane Lowder. "If you hire a personal trainer it's because you want to get fit. If you have a goal from the outset, there's more chance you'll be able to achieve it."

Be honest. "If you're not honest from the beginning, the coach may head off on a different tangent. Coaches respect that the individual is an expert on themselves. They will rely on the information you bring."

Put in the hard yards. "You will be given homework to do between sessions. You have to be prepared for it, otherwise it's going to take the coach longer to discover what your goals are."

Be prepared for a marathon, not a sprint. "Just like in exercise where some people drop weight straight away, some people find the job they want, or get promoted, immediately, while for others it takes longer. Sometimes you have to keep knocking on doors."

Believe in yourself. "A lot of people lack confidence in their skill set and have blinkers on as to their abilities. They have trouble seeing how their skills can transfer across industries."

