

Lesson Three: Types of Teams and Team Players

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A. Key Learning Points

1. Winning teams choose the team style that is best-suited to achieve its purpose.
2. Winning team players are aware of and appreciate diversity in their teammate's individual styles, perspective, and opinions.
3. Constructive disagreement/conflict is a healthy sign of a winning team.
4. Winning teams learn from experience, hardship, and failure.
5. Every player on a winning team contributes to the team's achievement regardless of differences in individual workload, responsibility, and attitude.
6. Some people are not suited for teamwork.

B. Real World Examples and Considerations for Practitioners

1. Winning teams choose the team style that is best-suited to achieve its purpose.

Teams that win choose the style that is best-suited for their industry, their project, and their team members' skills, styles, and preferences. Teams may be aggressive or conservative, offensive or defensive, carefully scripted or wonderfully spontaneous. Although variation among team styles is infinite, Iris clients find it useful to consider several alternative team styles based on familiar sports.

The Football Team: Football teams have three dedicated squads – offense, defense, and special teams. Plays are carefully scripted to assure alignment and maximize interdependence among teammates. Players are assigned a specific position based on their size, strength, speed, and skills. Players learn their plays from team play books. The game is made up of a series of time-specific plays with numerous interruptions/pauses between individual plays. Player substitutions are infrequent and occur when starting players are injured or when the team finds itself in special/unusual circumstances.

The football team approach is suitable for work teams that: 1) have many members, 2) have members from different corporate functions; 3) are undertaking a project of great size, scale, and complexity.

Auto manufacturers tend to use a football team approach to design, engineering, and production of a new automobile. Auto production teams have members who represent

R&D, engineering, manufacturing, sales, and service. The team adopts and manages a time-certain, budget-specific schedule for product launch. The product proceeds through a series of stages that include trials and revisions which result in final release.

The Basketball Team: Basketball teams have twelve players - five starters and seven substitutes. All players play both offense and defense. Positions are initially assigned based on athletes' size and skill, but, in fact, players exchange positions on-the-fly as the game progresses. Unlike football which interrupts action between plays, basketball games flow semi-continuously with limited interruption. Players use an agreed-upon offensive and defensive framework for positioning themselves on the floor, although plays are less scripted than in football. Improvisation is important for a successful basketball team. Substitutions occur for strategic reasons to change the pace or style of the ballgame and to give starting players a chance to refresh their energy.

The basketball approach to teamwork is suitable for teams that: 1) have fewer members, 2) have members who are familiar with one another and/or are able and willing to work spontaneously together, 3) are working on creative projects and projects where team deliverables and resources are less precisely defined, 4) are working on special projects while concurrently maintaining responsibility for effective daily operations. Great restaurants adopt a basketball team approach to serving customers. Team membership includes the chef, sous-chef, maitre-d, server, bus-boy, and cashier. Service flows at a continuous, semi-predictable pace. The team agrees on a serving framework but is required to improvise throughout the course of the meal. Substitutions are made when the primary server needs back-up or when a special customer is best-served by a specific employee.

The Baseball Team: Baseball teams have nine players. Each player is assigned a defensive position in the field based on his size, strength, speed, and skills. On offense, each player takes an individual turn to hit the baseball. When a player makes a hit he advances himself, and any teammate who may be ahead of him on the base paths.

Although winning baseball teams require strong teamwork among team players, we could argue that baseball is more of an individual game than football or basketball.

The baseball team approach to teamwork is suitable for teams: 1) whose team members have very specific and different albeit inter-related individual skills and perspectives, 2) have team members located in different locations, 3) have difficulty meeting together frequently in one place as one team, 4) are working on linear type projects where work can be organized and managed in a rational sequence or queue.

Teachers in a school use a baseball team approach to educating students. First Grade teachers teach their kids and then promote them to Second Grade teachers. Math 101 teachers teach their students and then refer them to Math 201 teachers. Although

teachers and classes emphasize individuality, overall student learning and achievement requires teamwork among teachers and alignment and integration of learning.

2. Winning team players are aware of and appreciate diversity in their teammate's individual styles, perspective, and opinions.

A team that does not appreciate and value diversity among its team members defeats the purpose of a team. At their best, winning teams bring together players with diverse talents, experience, and perspective to accomplish results that no one team member could accomplish on their own. Teams that lack diversity in breadth of skills, experience, and point-of-view are poorly prepared to solve complex problems or succeed at challenging tasks that, by their nature, require diversity.

In Chapters 2 and 3 of the recommended textbook, *Team Players and Teamwork*, Glenn Parker identifies four specific types of team players: Contributors, Collaborators, Communicators, and Challengers. Brief descriptions of each of these team player types are included in the reading highlights selection below. A team player self-assessment instrument is also available from XICOM for teams and team players that are interested in determining their team members player types (see recommended resources).

Many Iris clients also use the Myers-Briggs typology to help team members appreciate diversity in personal and professional work styles. A free on-line Myers-Briggs self-assessment is available on-line at www.humanmetrics.com. Once team members determine their Myers-Briggs types, we lead them through a discussion and learning exercise using the following matrices from Otto Kroeger with Janet M. Thuesen, *Type Talk At Work: How the 16 Personality Types Determine Your Success On The Job*:

The Four Basic Preferences

Where Do You Get Your Energy?

| | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| Extroverts (E) - from outside yourself | Introverts (I) - from within yourself |
|--|---------------------------------------|

How Do You Gather Information About Your World?

| | |
|--|---|
| Sensors (S) - in a literal, sequential way | iNtuitives (N) - in a more figurative, random way |
|--|---|

How Do You Prefer to Make Decisions?

| | |
|---|--|
| Thinkers (T) - objectively and impersonally | Feelers (F) - subjectively and interpersonally |
|---|--|

Your Preferred Day-to-Day Lifestyle

| | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Judgers (J) - decisive and planned | Perceivers (P) - spontaneous |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------|

The 16 Personality Types

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| ISTJ Life's Natural Organizers | ISFJ Committed to Getting the Job Done | INFJ An Inspiring Leaders and Follower | INTJ Life's Independent Thinkers |
| ISTP Just Do It | ISFP Action Speaks Louder than Words | INFP Making Life Kinder and Gentler | INTP Life's Problem Solvers |
| ESTP Making the Most of the Moment | ESFP Let's Make Work Fun | ENFP People are the Product | ENTP Progress is the Product |
| ESTJ Life's Natural Administrators | ESFJ Everyone's Trusted Friend | ENFJ Smooth-talking Persuaders | ENTJ Life's Natural Leaders |

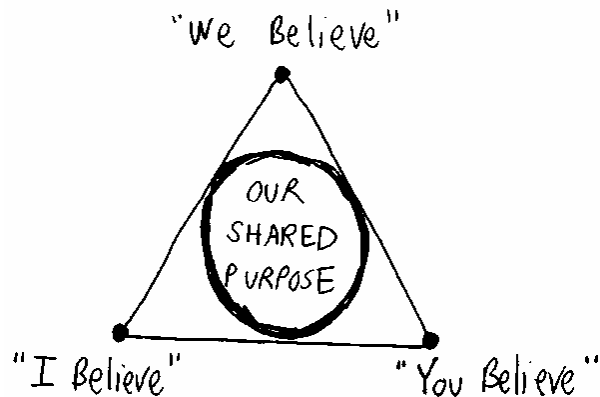
Temperament Work Styles

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>NF</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ENFJ INFJ ENFP INFP</p> <p>“Hi I’m an NF, and I’m here to help”</p> | <p>NT</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ENTJ INTJ ENTP INTP</p> <p>“Change for the sake of change produces learning, even if the only thing we learned is that we shouldn’t have changed”</p> |
| <p>SJ</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ESTJ ISTJ ESFJ ISFJ</p> <p>“Don’t fix what ain’t broke.”</p> | <p>SP</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ESFP ISFP ESTP ISTP</p> <p>“When all else fails, read the directions”</p> |

3. Constructive disagreement/conflict is a healthy sign of a winning team.

Disagreement when expressed constructively in the spirit of helping the team achieve its agreed-upon purpose and performance targets is healthy. In a winning team, conflict is an expression of the diverse perspective the team needs to succeed. Disagreement also shows that individual team members care enough to speak up and express a point-of-view that varies from the norm. Constructive disagreement also tends to exist in team environments where there is ample trust and mutual respect. To assure that conflict and disagreement is communicated and managed effectively, Iris recommends teams adopt a results-oriented

communication approach illustrated by the figure below:



In this model, 1) all team members agree on a shared purpose regardless of differences in individual opinion, 2) each team member is required to express his/her beliefs clearly and understandably, 3) each team member is required to understand the beliefs expressed by their teammates, regardless of whether they agree with them or not, 4) each team member is required to propose a belief that will be acceptable to all members of the team based.

4. Winning teams learn from experience, hardship, and failure.

One "Icebreaker" question, Iris often asks team members is: What was your most memorable professional failure? What did you learn from it? How are you better off today because of it?

In professional sports, teams rarely win the world championship on their first attempt. Experiencing and learning from failure is a necessary stepping-stone to ultimate victory. The same is true in most businesses. When Thomas Edison was asked what he had learned while inventing the light bulb, he responded, "499,999 ways how not to illuminate a glass globe using electricity." At 3M, a scientist who invented a poor bonding agent - a "losing" product in a company known for its reliable adhesives - learned how to turn this losing, not-so-sticky glue into an extraordinarily profitable product - Post-it notes. Likewise, in family life, we know that a child does not walk on its first attempt. (S)he must fall and fall again until (s)he learns to stand, and then to walk.

For winning teams, learning how to lose is often their first and most important initial team lesson/experience. Iris advises clients that it is important to "Fail Forward Faster." The key points here are that 1) failure is inevitable, 2) failure can drive forward progress, and 3) failing faster helps accelerate the learning necessary to achieve the ultimate victory.

Failing slowly can be terminal - and many conservative companies move so slowly in their effort to avoid mistakes that they miss crucial market opportunities (M&M Mars

Company is a good example – they declined Steven Spielberg’s invitation to feed ET M&M’s and ET subsequently made Reeses Pieces famous in his Oscar(s) winning performance).

5. Every player on a winning team contributes to the team’s achievement regardless of differences in individual workload, responsibility, and attitude.

Some teams break apart when team players become unduly concerned about inequitable distribution of the workload. Winning teams know that some players will inevitably shoulder a greater burden than others. They also know that most winning teams need the small and occasional but significant contributions of role players.

We frequently are asked how we would manage a team member with a relatively poor attitude who contributes infrequently to the team’s work. While we might wish this team member had a better attitude and work ethic, if this team member has expertise, skills, or influence/political connections the team may need to succeed, we encourage clients to defer criticism and utilize the team member realistically as best they can.

6. Some people are not suited for teamwork.

Not all work in a business is appropriate for teams. Not all employees in a company are suited for teamwork. It is important to identify non-team player employees and assign them to non-team type work. The sooner you do this - the sooner everyone will be happier and more productive. Also, if you are hiring a person for a team-type job, make sure you hire a team-type player. This may seem common sense, but it is a costly hiring mistake that companies make each and every day.

C. Recommended Reading Assignment & Highlights

All selections are from Glenn M. Parker, *Team Players and Teamwork*. Chapters 2 and 3

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Teams have an important place in our professional and personal lives. But not every group is a team and not every team is effective

A group of people is not a team. A team is a group of people with a high degree of interdependence geared toward achievement of a goal or completion of a task. In other words, they agree on a goal and agree that the only way to achieve it is to work together.

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Characteristics of an Effective Team

1. *Clear Purpose* *The vision, mission, goal or task of the team has been defined and is now accepted by everyone. There is an action plan.*
2. *Informality* *The climate tends to be informal, comfortable, and relaxed. There is no obvious tensions or signs of boredom.*
3. *Participation* *There is much discussion and everyone is encouraged to participate.*
4. *Listening* *The members use effective listening techniques such as questioning, paraphrasing, and summarizing to get out ideas.*
5. *Civilized Disagreement* *There is disagreement, but the team is comfortable with this and shows no signs of avoiding, smoothing over, or suppressing conflict.*
6. *Consensus Decisions* *For important decisions, the goal is substantial but not necessarily unanimous agreement through open discussion of everyone's ideas, avoidance of formal voting, or easy compromises.*
7. *Open Communication* *Team members feel free to express their feelings on the tasks as well as on the group's operation. There are few hidden agendas. Communication takes place outside of meetings.*
8. *Clear Roles and Work Assignments* *There are clear expectations about the roles played by each team member. When action is taken, clear assignments are made, accepted, and carried out. Work is fairly distributed among team members.*
9. *Shared Leadership* *While the team has a formal leader, leadership functions shift from time to time depending upon the circumstances, the needs of the group, and the skills of the members. The formal leader models the appropriate behavior and helps establish positive norms.*
10. *External Relations* *The team spends time developing key outside relationships, mobilizing resources, and building credibility with important players in other parts of the organization.*
11. *Style Diversity* *The team has a broad spectrum of team-player types including members who emphasize attention to task, goal setting, focus on process, and questions about how the team is functioning.*
12. *Self-Assessment* *Periodically, the team stops to examine how well it is functioning and what may be interfering with its effectiveness.*

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Our research indicates four types or styles of team players. Each style contributes in different ways to the success of the team, and each style has a downside when carried to an extreme ...

Each of us has the capacity to be an effective team player but in different ways. You and I both can be positive contributors to a team and yet act in very different fashions

A Contributor is a task-oriented team member who enjoys providing the team with good technical information and data, does his or her homework, and pushes the team to set high performance standards and to use their resources wisely. Most people see the Contributor as dependable.

A Collaborator is a goal-directed member who sees the vision, mission, or goal of the team as paramount but is flexible and open to new ideas, is willing to pitch in and work outside his or her defined role, and is able to share the limelight with other team members. Most people see the Collaborator as a “big-picture” person.

A Communicator is a process-oriented member who is an effective listener and facilitator of involvement, conflict resolution, consensus building, feedback, and the building of an informal, relaxed climate. Most people see the Communicator as a positive people person.

A Challenger is a member who questions the goals, methods, and even the ethics of the team, is willing to disagree with the leader or higher authority, and encourages the team to take well-conceived risks. Most people appreciate the value of the Challenger’s candor and openness.

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Teams need many things to be successful, and a variety of team-player styles is one important dimension of effective teamwork....

The message for team players is ‘Affirm your style, your strengths, your specific contributions to the team effort. And do it well. Be the best Contributor, Collaborator, Communicator, or Challenger. In addition, recognize that you have the capacity to make greater use of strengths of other styles. You can change. If you find that your effectiveness would increase by extending your team-player style then plan and work toward the incorporation of additional strengths into your repertoire.’ In the end, the complete team player is able to use the strengths of all four styles required by the situation.

D. Additional Resources and Links to Others Sources

Glenn M. Parker, *Team Player Survey* (available from XICOM at 1.800.759.4266)

Glenn M. Parker, *Team Development Survey* (available from XICOM at 1.800.759.4266)

Goal/QPC and Joiner Associates, *The Team Memory Jogger: A Pocket Guide for Team Members*. (Joiner, 1.800.669.8326)

Otto Kroeger with Janet M. Thuesen, *Type Talk At Work: How the 16 Personality Types Determine Your Success On The Job*. (Tilden Press, 1992)

A free on-line *Myers-Briggs/Jung Typology* self-assessment typology is available at www.humanmetrics.com or www.typelogic.com

Price Pritchett, *Teamwork: The Team Member Handbook: 16 Steps to Building a High Performance Team* (Pritchett & Associates, 1.800.992.5922)

Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (available from XICOM at 1.800.759.4266)

E. Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Think of the great team players you have worked with. List the qualities that you admire most in a team player.
2. Think of the worst team members you have ever worked with. List the qualities that you least appreciated about their approach to teamwork.