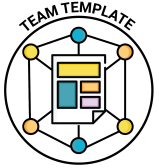


TOOL #12



Team Communication and Workstyle Assessment

This tool enables your team to better understand one another's communication and workstyle, and make appropriate accommodations, to support more effective and more enjoyable collaboration.

APPLICATION: In the next week, bring your team together to read through the background and complete the template on the last page. When done, submit your Tool Application Memo (TAM) to keep track of your team's progress.

BACKGROUND

A lot of times when employees are getting on each other's nerves, the issue has less to do with personality, and more to do with communication and workstyle. Without acknowledgement of this issue, collaboration will continue to be hard and efforts to achieve goals will face larger than needed obstacles. However, by providing a quick overview of the different work and communication styles, employees can begin to see these are common issues faced by all teams, and begin to take things less personally. In addition, by creating a process that helps people articulate the strategies that are most helpful to them, and giving others the opportunity to be heard better, all communication improves. That means more time focused on the work, and less time being annoyed by the way people interact with one another on the job.

STEPS

Step 1. Bring the team together and discuss which communication style each person resonates most with: Direct or Indirect. Then explore the discussion with follow-up questions such as, does it change based on who you are talking to? If so, why does it change? Do other people's style of communication feel frustrating? How do you handle that?



Direct

- Debate is prioritized
- Asking questions shows interest
- Interrupting is a sign of engagement and respect
- Enjoys digging into conflict when it occurs
- Viewed as harsh/rude by Indirect communicators

Indirect

- Consensus is prioritized
- Asking questions feels invasive
- Interrupting is disrespectful
- Prefers to avoid conflict
- Viewed as pollyanna/dishonest by direct communicators

Step 2. (Optional)

Engage in a practice conversation where Direct Communicators seek to try out Indirect Communication style, and Indirect Communications try out Direct Communication style. Ask folks to exaggerate their responses. Keep it light hearted and fun. This is just an opportunity to practice being in someone else's shoes to develop empathy and awareness for the multiple styles of communication available. Let the team members coach one another. And allow space for laughter.

Step 3.

Place 4 signs around the room, with one word on each: *Mover*, *Planner*, *Connector* and *Thinker*. Print out copies of the following list of definitions for all team-members, or in a central location online where everyone can read.

- **MOVER** = When there is a problem, Movers want to **JUMP RIGHT IN** and fix it! They tend to be independent, optimistic, love excitement, are creative, solutions-focused and sometimes willing to bend or break a rule to get to success.
- **PLANNER** = When there is a problem, Planners want to know the details - the who, what, when and where – before taking action. They tend to be highly organized, focus on playing by the rules, and often prefer stability over change.
- **CONNECTOR** = When there is a problem, Connectors want to make sure all voices are heard and everyone is feeling valued before jumping in to solve it. They tend to be in touch with their and other's emotions, are nurturing, talkative, and usually value people over deliverables.
- **THINKER** – When there is a problem, thinkers like to take time to consider all possibilities before taking action. These folks tend to value analysis of facts more than expressions of emotion, are concise with their language, and take more time with decision-making to see the whole picture.

Let the team know that everyone has all of the workstyles within them, but people tend to learn towards one or another. Read aloud the 4 workstyles and definitions on the print out, and ask everyone to move to the sign of the workstyle that most resonates with them right now. (If anyone can't decide between two, send them to the one with the smallest group of people.)

Once everyone has moved to that part of the room, give them 5 minutes to discuss the following questions in their groups:

1. *Why is this workstyle so effective?*
2. *Which other workstyles rub you the wrong way and why?*
3. *How could having all workstyles on a project benefit the team?*

Step 4.

Together, ask all team-members to complete the Work and Communication Style Teemplate on the next page. Feel free to modify the teemplate if there are questions that would be more fitting for your team's context. (If you modify it, please let us know what you changed on the TAM.)

Work and Communication Style Teampate

Team Member Name	What Style of Communication do you Resonate more with? (Direct or Indirect)	What work style do you tend to lean towards most? (Mover, Thinker, Connector, Planner)	What do you need to feel good, before moving forward on a project?	Is there anything else that would be helpful to know to improve communication with you?