EDUCATION, LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

INTERACTING IN HIGH PERFORMANCE TEAMS (3): TEAM WORKING TIPS

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This is the third in a series of articles linking Interaction Styles with effective team-working (previous articles published in "Typeface" in Spring 2015 and Spring 2016). In these articles, I linked the 3 Ps model of team effectiveness (Purpose, Processes, Personalities) to Interaction Styles. The 3 P's model shows that to work effectively together, team members need to have a clear, understood and shared Purpose; they need to have sound Processes in place for how they make decisions, share information, communicate with each other and how they run their meetings; and they need to be able to adapt their behaviour to the Personalities in the team. Interaction Styles, mapped on to the 3 Ps model, enables us to appreciate the potential contributions that people of each style make to these three aspects of effective team working and also be aware of each style's potential pitfalls when working in a team.

SEE DIAGRAM IN PREVIOUS ARTICLE

For example, the In Charge style may contribute by pushing ahead to achieve the task, but a pitfall may be not listening to and getting buy in from their colleagues. I once inadvertently put four In Charge people together in a workshop to carry out a task – they spent the whole time arguing about the approach and shouting over each other. Despite this, they did achieve the task, perhaps because their desire to get a result (any result!) outweighed how wedded each of them were to their own solutions. The Chart the Course style may contribute by setting out a milestone plan but a pitfall may be neglecting to chat and build relationships with others. I have worked with coaching clients with this style who go to meetings, open their laptops and ignore the other people in the room until the meeting starts. The Get things going style may contribute by engaging others to participate, but a pitfall may be creating a chaotic atmosphere. Again, I have worked with people who bring lots of enthusiasm, but lose sight of the end goal, leaving others confused about what they are supposed to do. Finally, the Behind the Scenes style may contribute by bringing together lots of information but a pitfall may be taking too long to make a decision, leading to frustration and disengagement in their colleagues.

Knowledge of interaction styles helps us to appreciate the inner motivations driving each person's external behaviour and the contribution they could make to the team, if they were able to channel

their energy constructively. **When teams work well, each person is able to make their unique contribution to achieving the task and they feel energised; when teams don't work well, people thwart each other's contributions and drain their energy.** The chart below is a reminder of the good intentions driving the behaviour of people with each interaction style, and their stressors when they are not able to meet their needs.

Inner Drives and Stressors

Chart-the-course	Behind-the-Scenes
I like to make deliberate decisions to get a desired result.	I like to make consultative decisions to get the best result possible.
My drive is to anticipate obstacles and have a process to achieve the expected goal.	My drive is to get as much input as I can from relevant sources to achieve a goal with quality.
I believe it is worth taking the time to anticipate what might happen	I believe that multiple points of view can be resolved
My stressor is not knowing what will happen.	My stressor is not having enough input, time or credit.
In-Charge	**Get-Things-Going**
I like to make quick decisions to get an achievable result.	I like to make collaborative decisions to get an embraced result.
My drive is to ensure some action is being taken by me or others towards the attainable goal.	My drive is to involve others to obtain buy-in to the agreed goal.
I believe it is worth taking a risk to decide and correcting later	I believe it is worth the time spent to engage others
My stressor is nothing being accomplished.	My stressor is not feeling involved or included.

Source: Susan Nash

This information is invaluable for team members to know about each other: once they appreciate the intention behind a colleague's behaviour, they are more understanding about how that intention is expressed; they are also better able to recognise the impact of their own behaviour on their colleagues and manage the interaction more tactfully.

The chart below gives tips on how to adapt your behaviour to work more constructively with people of different interaction styles, and also how to manage the impact of your own behaviour on others.

Team Working Tips

If you or they are…….	HOW TO WORK WITH THEM	HOW TO HELP YOURSELF
IN CHARGE	Be clear and concise Show you appreciate the urgency Tell them what you are doing and by when Help them to slow down, stand back and observe Tell them the reasons for things Give them specifics Suggest ideas they haven't considered Push back if necessary, they don't mind Join them in their humour	Learn to listen to others Avoid being critical of them and their ideas Give others time to think Defer immediate action – stop the "urgency" habit Step back and reprioritise Build in time delays to think before responding to requests Use passive relaxation techniques eg mindfulness, between energy bursts
GET THINGS GOING	Encourage their active participation Listen as they talk things through and show interest Make positive comments Highlight the benefits of some options Express your own ideas, thoughts and feelings Act as a sounding board for them Help them focus on clarity and decision-making Tell them to relax and listen	Remind yourself that you don't have to be involved Focus your energy where you can help to move things forward Ask for input from others and listen to it Reframe negative reactions – put them in perspective Find someone to give you support and guidance Recognise when consensus is not needed
BEHIND THE SCENES	Be open and friendly but not too expressive Allow pauses for thinking time Ask questions and listen to the answers Ask them where they are in their thoughts Ask them to explain how the decision will be made Don't pressure them to make decisions Offer choices and pros and cons Give them credit for their input	Break the task into smaller chunks Clarify where decisions are needed now and which areas can wait for more data Ask for time and space to work out your thoughts Find out and think about meeting topics ahead of time Learn to be more assertive in expressing own views Tell others how their input was included in the final decision
CHART THE COURSE	Be calm, direct and matter of fact Slow down and listen Stay focused, don't get side-tracked Be patient as they express their thoughts Let them know of changes to the plan	Ask for input early in the process Try alternative means to gain clarity in direction Focus on what can be influenced or controlled Write things down to help you clarify

	Talk about the goal and movement towards it Offer input <u>early</u> in the process Let them know what to expect and update them on progress Encourage them to disclose their thinking and details	your thoughts Plan how to disclose your thoughts appropriately rather than saying nothing

Sources: Linda Berens *Interaction Essentials,* Susan Nash *Manage your energy, not your time*

I have used the chart above with coaching clients, who are having difficulties building relationships with and influencing colleagues, particularly in complex, matrix organisations where meetings are often conducted remotely. I use it in two ways:

- To help the coachee adapt their behaviour to get what they need - I encourage the coachee to select two or three items from the "how to help yourself" column, and consciously plan to use these techniques during an interaction, noting afterwards how it went, what the impact was on the other participants, what response they got and how they felt.
- To help them put themselves in the other person's position – what might the other person's interaction style be, what will they want from the interaction, what might be important to them? Using the "how to help them" tips, what could the coachee change about their own behaviour to help the other person get what they need?

Clients are often surprised that a few simple changes to behaviour can have a big impact on achieving the result they want.

References

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