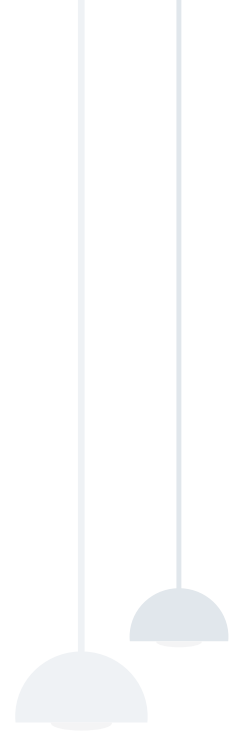




MCQUAIG PRESENTS

THE QUICK GUIDE TO BUILDING A PRODUCTIVE TEAM





Introduction

Teams and how effectively they work together can be the backbone of a company's success or the architect of its failure. How they handle challenges, innovate ideas, and complete tasks helps propel a department forward and ensures deadlines are met. But teams are a dynamic and changeable element of any business and getting them right doesn't often happen by accident.

Take McDonald's, as an example. Now heralded as the company that streamlined efficiency and created what we now think of as the fast food model, McDonald's didn't come out of the gate with a brilliant process. It was hard work, practice, and trial and error that allowed the first McDonald's restaurant to figure out a way to produce the most burgers in the least amount of time. And much of that success boiled down to the collaboration of their first team as everyone had to work seamlessly together in order to achieve a sum that was greater than its parts. Each person, from buns to burgers, contributed something different to the final product and mishaps were avoided through timely and open communication.

Now, your company probably isn't flipping burgers, but the basic principle is the same: **next level productivity requires optimum communication and coordination.** So when it comes to creating and supporting teams, how can you achieve that required optimization and where should you start?

"Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success."
-Henry Ford ¹



Why do strong teams matter?

Most people have been in many sorts of different teams, some more successful than others. And if you've been in a less than optimal team then you know things still get done. Maybe not as fast or as well as they could have been but if some level of work is being achieved, is it worth your time to try and change the team culture into something more effective? The short answer is, yes. Improving teamwork is always a positive step that can have a ripple effect in other areas of talent management. But don't take our word for it. Let's see what the research suggests:

- 86% of employees and executives blame a lack of communication and collaboration for workplace failures²
- 97% of employees believe a lack of alignment within a team impacts how a project or task will turnout³
- 54% of employees say a strong sense of community will keep them at a company longer⁴
- 33% of employees say a lack of open, honest communication leads to a decline in morale⁵
- 37% of employees cited having a great team as a reason not to job hop⁶

Spending the time to make teams more effective has the power to change engagement levels, company culture, turnover and retention rates, and productivity. Isn't that worth spending some time on?





What are the traits of a strong team?

Let's start with the basics. What makes a good team good? There are a number of factors and opinions that can be considered when it comes to matching people together. Some teams are built by the necessity of a task. Some are temporary, and some are even remote. But no matter why those teams were put together, a successful, well-oiled group usually involves:

- Each individual understanding their own strengths and weaknesses
- Other team members seeing how their unique perspectives work together harmoniously
- A manager or team leader coordinating roles according to strengths and skills
- Communicating as a team according to individual preferences

The old adage treat others as you want to be treated is a good start, but to truly be successful that saying needs a little tweak. **Instead, treat others as they want to be treated.** Now granted, this requires a level of awareness not every team has but if it can be cultivated, educating a team to see and respect their differences and behave accordingly can help improve efficiency, build stronger relationships, and create more resiliency for when the inevitable bumps in the road pop up. **Awareness of both self and others are necessary to set your team on the right path.**





Step 1: Facilitating self-awareness

When it comes to self-awareness, whether you're a manager, team leader, or even teammate, the first place to start is with yourself. In order to know how to best work with others, you need to understand what you bring to the team and why you behave and make decisions the way you do. **In fact, some even say self-awareness is the essence of good leadership.**⁷ Knowing your own capabilities will help you direct and lead your team more effectively. To learn more about your own approach, try asking yourself the following questions:

- What do you bring to the table? Knowing what kinds of tasks you're best suited for will allow you to optimize your strengths.
- Where are your gaps? Understanding what you're not amazing at will help determine when you should ask for help.
- What might be better left at home? Recognizing certain behaviours that may not come across so well to others will help you put your best self forward.

Spending some time with these questions or even writing down your answers will help you think more deeply about your own behaviour and beliefs. Once you have a better sense of how you act in the workplace, it's time to think beyond your own role as a leader. How can you support increased self-awareness in a team setting?



Support from assessments

The self-awareness activity is easy enough to do by yourself, but it can make for difficult conversations when trying to get others to think objectively about what they do and why they do it. Especially if this is a first conversation, don't have your team consider this information together but give them space to think about it on a more personal level. **One way to help facilitate this kind of discussion is with assessments that provide insight into a person's own behaviour.** While the McQuaig Self-Development assessment is, of course, our choice, it's important that any test you choose to use come with a few features including:

- **Timing:** Employees will lose interest if a test is too long. Ideally, look for one that's 15-20 minutes.
- **Language:** Learning about your own strengths and weaknesses can be challenging so ensure the test and reports are framed with positive language to support adoption.
- **Insight:** Make sure the report includes actionable next steps so employees can see a path forward towards a better level of self-awareness.

Assessments in general, whether for hiring, development, or team building, can give managers a helping hand. Understanding more about your new hires or team members allows for better task assignment, more tailored feedback, and stronger relationship building. It also sends a strong message that an employee's development matters and is a priority in the company.





Step 2: Creating team awareness

Once each individual member of your team has a better understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses, it's time to move on to the team as a whole. Ever noticed how you're most productive around the people who "get" how you work? It's the same with your staff. **Each person has a certain set of factors that allow them to perform at their best.** If your team can create those conditions for one another, it's more likely that everyone will work at their highest capacity.

There are a several ways to start that conversation either by working off of your self-development reports or using another tool such as a personality assessment. A high-quality personality assessment can categorize each member of your team into a particular profile. **Profiles are useful in a team setting because it's an easy way to help teammates understand how they all operate, what traits they have in common, and where worldviews and perspectives may differ.** Plus it's a more productive way of starting these conversations instead of using a self-development report which should be kept between an employee and manager, rather than offered up for everyone to read.

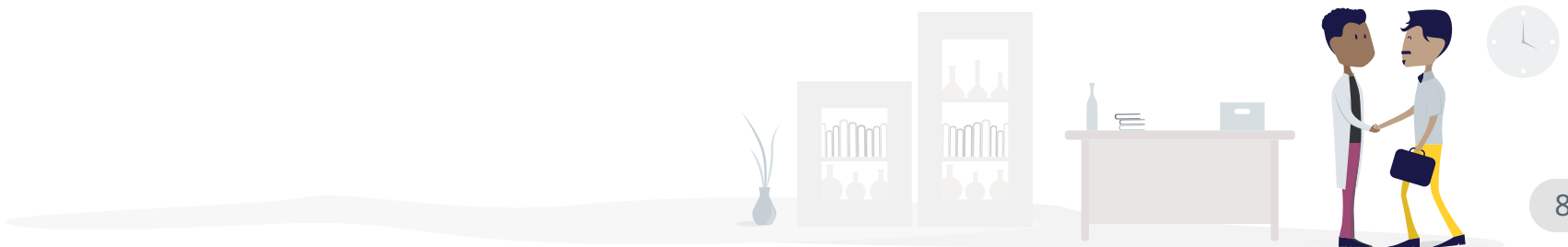
If you opt to use personality assessments, you'll notice a number of different profile types around the office, some more common than others. There are many short activities you can run to get insight into the different profiles on your team and how they operate together. To keep everything objective, you can also opt for a facilitator to come in as an outside expert to lead a session.



Team awareness activity

Here's a quick activity to help you get started exploring what you've uncovered about yourself in a team setting.

1. Divide your team into groups based on their profile type (using with the McQuaig Word Survey or another personality assessment of your choice).
2. Have the profile teams work in their groups to complete the following statements:
 - We're great on a team because...
 - We might drive others crazy because...
 - We prefer to contribute to the team by...
 - If you want to persuade us, you should...
 - If you want to annoy us, all you have to do is...
3. Read out the answers to the full team and notice how groups of people share similar personality traits.
4. Discuss how those traits interact with other profile groups and where any potential problems might lie.
5. If you want to go a step further, combine all the groups again and see if you can brainstorm strategies of how best to communicate or work together.





Step 3: Playing to strengths

When you play to people's natural strengths, you'll start to see your bottom line being impacted as well. This happens in several ways, but the main ones are:

- **More productivity:** Simply put, some people will be better at certain things than others. Get each person to do what they do best, and the overall output of your team will increase.
- **Increased employee retention:** Nobody wants to feel like they're not good at their job. Aligning people's skills and personality to their work will make them feel like they belong.⁸ That sense of belonging with help will reduce your turnover rates and all the costs associated with it.
- **Higher employee engagement:** When people feel like they are succeeding and working with a purpose, they are more likely to enjoy their roles.⁹ Everyone likes to feel like they're making real contributions and being appreciated for it.
- **Strengthened company culture:** When your workforce is happy and effective, culture improves. As a bonus, the more your entire workforce learns about self-development and how different personalities work together, the stronger your culture will grow as conflict and gossip shrink.

And it makes sense, doesn't it? When people feel happy and useful, they are more apt to put in the extra time and effort to get things done, increasing the overall success of the company in a natural way.



Match strengths to tasks

Putting your people in the right place is all about understanding what they're good at. They might have some great learned skills but pay attention to how their personality enhances their natural strengths too. Catalogue these strengths so you can allocate roles accordingly. Consider following these steps:

1. For each team member, pull their key strengths and developmental areas from their personality profile. Think about what kind of work they would be great at and what they might hate.
2. Make a list of tasks or jobs that need to get done in the next few months.
3. Match them up! Assign people to work that they would both excel at and love wherever possible. Or if you're assigning someone a task that will be more challenging for them, make a note of it and try to align their next project more closely to their strengths to strike a better balance.
4. This is critical - explain to each person individually why they'll be great in their role. Then, debrief the team as a whole on what you've done. Make sure everyone is aware of each other's strengths so if they get stuck, they know who to go to for support.

These steps will help to foster a collaborative culture where people work together to cover each other's weaknesses. That's what a cohesive team is all about.





Step 4: Improving communication

Communication is one of the cornerstones of success. When no one knows what's going on, confusion and preventable mistakes reign supreme. Not to mention that such an environment leads to increased stress and decreased employee engagement which, in turn, impacts turnover rates. So how can we improve this vital and fundamental part of the way we do business? Good communication stems a core of both understanding and empathy. Here's a scenario using details from two McQuaig personality profiles:

Person A

- likes to receive high level information
- cares to take the time to socialize a bit
- needs to move things along fairly quickly
- wants to challenge the status quo

Person B

- needs more details on a topic
- finds socializing to be a waste of time
- likes to take the time to think things through before moving on
- doesn't feel comfortable working outside existing structures

How will these two people ever get anything done together on a team? That is exactly where understanding and empathy come into play. Yes, you need people with different profile types to naturally succeed in different roles – but they all have to work together to move the business forward. This is where self-awareness blends together with awareness of others. If you understand how to present things to your colleagues in a way that they can digest – even if it goes against your natural tendencies – and they do the same for you, you'd be surprised at how much more you can accomplish.



Conclusion

Bringing people together into well-formed teams is a challenge. Everyone brings something unique to their workplace, from their past experiences to their current worldview. **Understanding those differences and finding ways to work to each other's strengths can go a long way toward reaching optimum productivity and engagement.** Part of this process is creating an environment of awareness, both individually and in a team setting. Self-development or personality assessments can do the heavy lifting of providing the information required to assign roles and improving communication for increased productivity. Once those insights are known, it's easier to teach a team how to understand each other's strengths and weaknesses while showing empathy for the areas where teammates may not always react alike.

Arming yourself and your team with this approach to creating strong professional relationships and working as a cohesive unit can be the difference between a team that rises to every occasion together and one that splinters and falls. **And once this kind of awareness becomes part of the team culture, you'll find new hires find their feet more quickly and the overall resiliency of your team will improve.** So before you throw up your hands at a team who's not working well together, take a step back and remember everyone is different. A great manager makes an asset out of those differences and when they do, their teams flourish.



Notes

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