

Creating High Performing Teams by Understanding Personality Types

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Power players. Team players.

Extroverts. Introverts.

Optimists. Pessimists.

No matter how you classify them, you probably have a wide range of personality types in each of your work teams. As a manager, understanding these personality types – and how best to manage them – can help you increase workers' job satisfaction, decrease employees' stress levels and improve the performance of your teams.

Used properly, personality assessments can help you learn more about an employee's work personality, including his:

- preferred management style;
- natural abilities (both present and potential);
- work preferences and work style;
- motivations;
- preferred styles for thinking, communicating and learning;
- potential weaknesses;
- ways of dealing with things like conflict, change and work team realities.

By learning more about an employee's personality type, you can identify your employee's natural areas of strength and make sure his job aligns with those strengths. By doing what he's good at, he will enjoy his work even more.

Not surprisingly, when work is meaningful and satisfying for an employee, he will naturally strive to do his very best. Instead of being motivated by money – or even worse, by fear of losing his job – he will be driven by a sincere desire to achieve. This desire will fuel his own success and enhance his contribution to his work team.

Here are a few tips for motivating common personality types, so they'll perform better as a team:

The Leader / Driver / Performer

- Instead of viewing this individual's natural "take charge" attitude as threat, use it to your advantage. Encourage him to lead team meetings and organize events.
- Appeal to his logical, rather than emotional, side.
- Pair him with a mentor to teach him the finer points of team leadership, such as tact and diplomacy.
- Be direct in communicating with him.
- Look for opportunities for promotion.
- Offer him the respect and recognition he craves.
- Appeal to his desire to be productive – challenge him with spearheading new projects and team initiatives.

The Follower / Team Player

- Determine his work expectations and how to best meet them, dispelling from the outset any unrealistic expectations.
- Give him problems to solve (with limited risk), allowing him to use his creativity and develop his talents.
- Focus on earning his trust and respect.
- Place him in work teams with a clearly defined leader.
- Reward and thank him frequently for his contributions.

The Insecure / Sensitive Employee

- Although you probably already provide plenty of feedback for this type of worker, continue to offer the reassurance and clarification he needs.
- Instead of telling him what to do, encourage him to reach his own conclusions and make his own decisions.
- In team situations, give him the responsibility of ensuring that members' ideas are not automatically dismissed, and that group harmony is considered in making team decisions.
- Be sensitive and sincere in communications. When his risks pay off, praise him; when they don't, avoid lashing out at him. Instead, help him learn from his mistakes.

The Innovative / Impulsive Employee

- Embrace his enthusiasm and use it to energize the teams of which he is a part.
- Give him plenty of variety in his job, including high-stress and/or deadline-oriented work.
- Place him in teams where his creative ideas will be welcomed.
- Reminding him of the value of careful reasoning. When his impulsiveness leads to mistakes, ask if he would have done something differently if he had waited a few hours.

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