

Utilizing Psychological Profiles to Build Effective Teams

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Abstract: In today's rapidly evolving and competitive work environment, building high-performing teams is more important than ever. Building strong, viable and cohesive where team members work together collaboratively and with "one voice", can not only have positive effects upon the success of the team and/or the department, but ultimately, upon the entire organization.

One of the most innovative and insightful ways to enhance team performance is by leveraging psychological profiles. Understanding individual personalities and behavioral tendencies can be a rewarding game-changer when it comes to forming cohesive, productive, and collaborative teams. By considering psychological profiles, leaders can match team members in a way that maximizes strengths, balances weaknesses, and fosters a culture of collaboration.

The perspective to be presented builds upon the work of past contributors in the field but also highlights new approaches that help make the utilization of psychological profiles in team building endeavors more useful in the 21st century's highly paced and evolving work environment.

Key words: effective teams; teamwork, teambuilding, psychological profiles, team dynamics

JEL codes: I20; M12; M14; M53

1. Literature Review

A seminal work by Belbin (2010), explores how psychological profiling can be used to understand and optimize team roles in the workplace. Belbin's "Team Roles" methodology helps identify the strengths and weaknesses of individuals, contributing to better collaboration and team dynamics.

Furnham & Steele (1993) explain the impact of personality assessments and psychological profiling on job performance and team dynamics. They delve deeply into the exploration of how understanding individual traits helps to improve communication, collaboration, and overall team effectiveness.

The utilization of emotional intelligence (EI) is the primary focus in Goleman (2006), whereby it is shown how Emotional Intelligence (EI), a profoundly useful psychological methodology, can be leveraged for effective team development and a collaborative employee mindset. The article offers practical ways to assess and improve team members' emotional awareness and social skills, key components in effective teambuilding.

Hogan, & Holland (2003) illustrate a theoretical framework on how psychological profiles, such as the Hogan Personality Inventory (HPI), can be used to evaluate job performance and facilitate better team integration.

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The insights from this study can help improve selection, development, and teambuilding processes, and can have a significant impact upon both the hiring process, as well as creating effective teams later on.

McCrae & Costa (2004) are proponents of the “NEO Five-Factor Inventory (FFI)”, a tool which provides a robust model of personality profiling often used in team-building contexts. Understanding the so-called “Big Five Personality Traits” can assist team members to work more effectively together by acknowledging different working styles and preferences.

Schein (2010) gives a profound insight into how the psychological profiles of team members influence organizational culture. It highlights the role of leadership in understanding and shaping team dynamics, with an emphasis on psychological profiling as a tool to align team behavior with organizational goals.

In a ground-breaking study (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977), the concept of group development stages is discussed. They provide a foundation for understanding how psychological profiling can aid in guiding teams through the norming and performing stages, ultimately leading to more cohesive and productive teams.

2. What Are “Psychological Profiles”

Psychological profiles are detailed analyses of an individual’s personality, behavior, cognitive patterns, and emotional responses. These profiles are derived from various personality assessments, tools, and theories, including well-known models like the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), Big Five Personality Traits, DISC Assessment, and Hogan Assessments. These tools aim to understand how people perceive the world, make decisions, interact with others, communicate most effectively, and handle work-related stress and challenges (Belbin, 2010).

Each team member brings a unique set of characteristics and preferences to the table. Psychological profiles include (but are not necessarily limited to) key areas such as:

- **Communication Styles:** Understanding whether an individual is more extroverted or introverted, or prefers to communicate in writing versus face-to-face, can help avoid miscommunication and facilitate smoother interactions.
- **Decision-Making:** Some people may be risk-averse, while others are more comfortable with uncertainty. Identifying these traits can help create a decision-making strategy that works for the entire team.
- **Stress Responses:** Knowing how team members react to pressure or conflict can help in managing stress and resolving conflicts in a healthier manner.
- **Motivational Drivers:** Understanding what motivates each team member — whether it’s recognition, achievement, autonomy, or collaboration — can lead to more engaged and committed workers (Schein, 2010).

3. Using Psychological Profiles in Teambuilding, Hiring Practices and Employee Engagement: Findings and Approaches

More organized team building, better hiring practices, greater employee engagement and interaction, stronger and more cohesive approaches to teamwork, are just some of the benefits to be found in using psychological profiles in team building activities:

3.1 Optimizing Team Composition

Psychological profiles help leaders build a team with complementary skills and personalities. Instead of relying on traditional metrics like skills and experience alone, leaders can create diverse teams with individuals who balance and complement each other. For example, a highly creative person may work well alongside someone with strong analytical abilities. Similarly, having a mix of introverts and extroverts can create a balanced dynamic where both reflection and action are prioritized.

3.2 Improving Communication and Collaboration

Effective communication is the foundation of any successful team. When team members understand each other's communication preferences and behavioral tendencies, they can adjust how they interact. For example, an extroverted team member might feel comfortable sharing ideas in group discussions, while an introverted member might need more time to process and prefer written communication. By acknowledging and respecting these differences, teams can prevent misunderstandings and ensure that everyone's voice is heard.

3.3 Enhancing Conflict Resolution

Psychological profiles can also shed light on how different individuals approach conflict. Some may prefer to address issues directly, while others may avoid confrontation or withdraw. Understanding these tendencies can help leaders intervene early to prevent tensions from escalating. By fostering a culture of open communication and empathy, conflicts can be resolved constructively, leading to stronger relationships and a healthier work environment.

3.4 Building Trust and Psychological Safety

Trust is critical to team success. Psychological profiles can foster trust by helping individuals appreciate each other's differences and understand why certain behaviors may be exhibited. Teams with a high degree of psychological safety are more likely to take risks, share ideas, and innovate. Knowing that team members are aware of one another's tendencies and can accommodate differences in working styles fosters an environment where everyone feels respected, valued and recognized.

3.5 Tailoring Leadership and Feedback

Not all team members respond to leadership or feedback in the same way. While some individuals may thrive on constructive criticism, others may require more positive reinforcement to stay motivated. Psychological profiles allow leaders to customize their approach to each team member, ensuring that feedback is delivered in a way that resonates and drives performance. This individualized leadership style increases overall team engagement and job satisfaction (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977).

4. Implementing Psychological Profiling in Team Building

For leaders looking to implement psychological profiling in team building, several steps may be considered:

Use Reliable Tools: Choose assessment tools that have been proven to be valid and reliable. Tools like the Big Five Personality Traits, MBTI, or the DISC assessment can provide deep insights into individual differences.

Integrate Assessments Early: Implement psychological profiling early in the hiring or team formation

process. This ensures that the composition of the team is intentional and aligned with the team's goals.

Conduct Regular Check-Ins: Team dynamics can evolve over time. Regularly reassessing individuals' psychological profiles and checking in on the team's overall dynamics will help maintain harmony and ensure continued success.

Encourage Self-Awareness: Encourage team members to take assessments and reflect on their own profiles. Self-awareness is a key aspect of personal development and helps individuals better understand how their behaviors impact the team.

Promote Flexibility: While psychological profiles provide valuable insights, it's important not to box people into rigid categories. Personal growth and change are possible, and team members may shift in their preferences over time. Promote flexibility and openness to growth.

5. Summary

Using psychological profiles to build effective teams offers organizations the opportunity to optimize team composition, improve communication, and maintain an environment of trust and collaboration.

The methodologies presented herein are all effective, viable and proven processes in using psychological profiling in building teams.

While each can "stand alone" in certain regards, it would seem more viable to consider using a combination of these methodologies as needed, i.e., "picking and choosing" the best components of each, to achieve team building goals.

By understanding individual personalities, preferences, and tendencies, leaders can create high-performing teams that are aligned with the organization's goals while also ensuring that every team member feels valued and understood. When psychological profiling is combined with effective leadership, a stable and growth-oriented work environment, as well as ongoing team development, companies can maximize their potential and drive sustainable success in the workplace (Goleman, 2006).

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