



Teamwork?

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Ah, the magic word *teamwork*. We all aspire to it; and so often we see it almost within our grasp. Yet at the end of the day it does not come as readily as we had hoped. Why not? While getting consistent co-operation is possible, it is not achievable through a quick-fix or a silver bullet. **BUT IT IS ACHIEVABLE, AND REAL TEAMWORK IS AVAILABLE, IF YOU WORK AT IT THE 'RIGHT' WAY.**

1. Overview

Teamwork and its positive results are easy to imagine: the oarsmen rowing together to achieve victory, putting a human on the moon, having a successful birthday party. The converse is equally easy to envisage: oars out of synch, the explosion of Challenger, the kids run amuck tossing around ice cream. What about the dozens of examples in our own offices of ongoing tension between staff members – if not downright hostility?

And the solutions? Get a team motivator in here; organize a team-building mountain climb; have a party; award some bonuses. These indeed have the potential to motivate – for about a week and a half. All are expedient solutions, the so-called silver bullets. Even instant-weight loss and getting-rich-quick schemes attract participants. But when all is said and done, have you even seen any of these programs achieve the results claimed? Weight loss can be had and getting rich is possible, but for most people, it comes only through reasoned, methodical, and systematic approaches. So, if it is true for weight loss you can be fairly certain that a parallel applies to establishing real teamwork for your group.

2. Why Doesn't a Quick-fix Work?

The fast answer doesn't work because it does not get at the root cause of hostilities among people. It does not address the issue of funda-

mental human behaviour. In fact it makes no effort to understand the reasons for such behaviours; it just pours out immediate gratifications. Band-aids may stop the bleeding temporarily but they won't save the person unless the source of the haemorrhaging is addressed.

3. The Fundamentals of Human Behaviour

Three over-riding human dimensions guide how we behave.

One, all people are different – not good and bad, but different. People are so different that they often cannot understand why other persons think the way they do. These differences lead to conflict. And conflict is both a necessary and a natural consequence of these differences. Since conflict is inevitable, success depends on whether that conflict is handled destructively or constructively. (See more in sections 4a and 4b below.)

Two, personal happiness of the worker or the individual is achieved if barriers to happiness are removed. But failure of people in control to remove those barriers will result in lack of enthusiasm, and even resentment, on the job. (See section 5 below.)

Three, emotions dominate our thinking and prevent handling of conflict constructively, which works against logical solutions. Teamwork is all



about logical cooperation. (See section 6 below.)

4. The First Human Dimension – People Differences

a. People are Different

In 350 BC, Hippocrates identified four types of personality types, the sum of which have evolved down today to most human psychological systems and metrics, such as *Myers-Briggs*, *Colors*, *DISC* and the *CCCC* version, *PAVF*. While this paper only has space to detail the highlights of the significance of these four types, several conclusions related to them are important. (i) Each of us has pieces of all four, but usually we are strong in one or two (and weak the remaining ones). (ii) No person is strong in all four. (iii) We need all four ‘types’ to make balanced decisions, to answer the basic questions of *what*, *how*, *why*, *when* and *who*, fundamental to all issues. (iv) If we need all four and no one possesses strength in all four, we need at least two people to make balanced decisions. (v) If we have two (or more) people, then we will have conflict as noted in section 3 above, under “**One**”. (vi) These four differences are exacerbated by the fact that most of the time we cannot understand any of the other personality types we lack ourselves. Likewise, others cannot understand the personality ‘types’ we possess if different from theirs. Let us pause to examine the four personality types.

b. Personality Types

The four personality types are described briefly below. Look them over carefully and select the one or two types that seem to fit you, that is, the ones that have the most number of words that relate to you. If you can’t be objective about yourself, pick words that describe your partner and continue on that basis.

I. Pick one or two letters from the words below.

P (Producer): produces, driven, disciplined, persistent, hard-working, direct)

A (Analyzer): analyzes, detail-oriented, plans ahead, thorough, organized, logical)

V (Visionary): visions of improvement, risky, ideas-person, creative, curious, dreams ahead)

F (Friend): friendly, people-oriented, empathetic, engenders co-

operation)

Not only which of these actions do you do, but more importantly, which of these are fun for you to do.

II. In the workplace (or in any other human endeavour) select one or two letters of each of P, A, V and F person that show how you would like to focus on jobs that allow you to:

P (Deliver results, get things done, juggle many balls at once, drive forward and take the direct route)

A (Organize, be careful, be thorough, apply logic, get into detail and plan ahead)

V (Create, innovate, improve, make changes, take risks and be outstanding)

F (Connect with people, develop cooperation, be devoted to the cause, be kind and be empathetic)

III. At the same time, each of P, A, V and F people will **NOT** likely enjoy (or might):

P (Not have infinite patience with slow people and not like having to put up with non-performers)

A (Not trust every stranger nor take unnecessary risks)

V (Hate repetitiveness and having to pay continuous attention to high detail)

F (Avoid being hard on people and dislike dealing with conflictive situations)

IV. The inability to see the other’s point of view can be illustrated with examples. Choose 1 or 2 letters that most closely apply to you:

P (Will not understand why **F** cannot make a decision and lacks a sense of urgency)

A (Will not understand why **V** is such a show off and so careless with details)

V (Will not understand why **A** is so cautious and nitpicky)

F (Will not understand why **P** is in such a hurry and so insensitive to the feelings of others)



Of course this list can go on and on. The point is that each thinks the other is at fault and readily justifies blaming the other for being the way they are. Conflict is the result.

Looking at I, II, III and IV, identify the stronger 1 or 2 'types' for you (or your partner). E.g.: "Based on the above, I seem to be a PA."

5. The Second Human Dimension – Barriers to Happiness

The barriers that prevent us from being happy on the job, or otherwise relating to key people in our lives, are:

- i. We are not allowed to be in control of decisions, even those which fall within our own domains. In the extreme we are micromanaged. We need to be allowed to make choices pertinent to our role.
- ii. We do not sense that we are appreciated on the job, or within our personal environments. Appreciation is manifested by being listened to by people important to us, especially our bosses (or our life partners) and being asked for advice by them.
- iii. We do not feel that in our work, we are contributing to something worthwhile in the grand scheme of things. We need to be allowed to feel good about what we do and to feel free to follow our passions.
- iv. We do not feel we are achieving enough success in what we are doing. Bosses must help set reasonable goals for the individual and provide encouragement to get there.
- v. We are not moving quickly enough to the next level of task, of increasing complexity or variation on the job, i.e. learning. Humans are learning creatures and must be provided the opportunity to learn.
- vi. We do not feel we are expanding in the job,

namely we feel we are not growing because of that lack of learning above.

- vii. We are not allowed to make mistakes; yet mistakes create the deepest learning imprint. Blaming or finger-pointing discourage our moving ahead. Allowing mistakes permits people to take the risk to open new doors, to innovate and to explore. All companies and life thrive from the freedom to innovate.

If barriers are not removed, there will be a conflict between the employee and the boss or whoever is keeping the barriers in place.

6. The Third Human Dimension – Killed by Emotions

You might say, 'fear' drives everything. The sense of threat creates fear dictates how people behave. They must react to fear because Mother Nature has endowed humans with an emotional response center that operates 10 to 100 time faster than our brain's logic processor. The emotions will always dominate. Mother Nature set this up 50 or 100 million years ago to create a means for us to react quickly to any threat. And we humans have inherited it to this day. Why are humans repulsed by snakes? Because it was hard-wired in us 20 million years ago when we, as mice, had great reason to fear snakes. Today, the moment someone says something that trespasses on our territory, our ideas, degrades us, etc. our emotional responder kicks in with brutal swiftness. It is brutal because it triggers some 50 physiological changes that we have no control over: sweaty palms, eyes dilate, adrenalin lifts, hair stands on end, white blood cells increase (to deal with the bite of the snake). Only later, when all of this has subsided do we begin to be logical. "Why did I say such a stupid thing?" Two people dealing with issues all have differences (as noted repeatedly above) and so will get into conflict, also as noted above. (Some are even stupid enough to allow their emotions to lead them to begin wars.) But we have to move from the destructive emotional drivers to the logic processor that tells us what really makes sense in this circumstance. Certainly, cooperation takes a back seat if we let emotions run things as they may – that



nasty defensive email, the dirty stare, the pouted lips – all means of responding emotionally to perceived unpleasantness or threat. That is, emotions kill our chances of cooperating.

7. What happens if we do not Control these Three Dimensions

Of course, everyone knows the consequence of hostility: lack of teamwork. But more specifically,

Dimension One: If we do not understand why a person behaves the way they do, we become intolerant of that ‘misbehaviour’ and can take on a blaming attitude. “Why is Harry so impatient? He should just calm down.” On the other hand, Harry thinks: “I can’t stand laid-back people; doesn’t Sarah know we have a deadline to meet in two days?” Even though Harry and Sarah are looking at the same issue, each has quite a different view or attitude about it. Who is right? They both are; but it doesn’t matter if they don’t see eye-to eye. What does matter is that they must somehow get to see the same view – or at least appreciate the other’s viewpoint. Otherwise they will not cooperate as they should.

More specifically, Dimension Two: If we do not remove the barriers to happiness, the most important relationship at work will be jeopardized – that between boss and worker. Ongoing cooperation will be compromised in the most important relationship of all. (Try that one on your marriage folks!)

Specifically, also, Dimension Three: If we do not find a way to control emotions, unthinking reactions will rule the day, the situation will escalate out of control, nothing will be resolved and very little will get done. Certainly no one will be cooperating.

With all those acting on us, on a daily basis, how on earth could humans cooperate as a team? Instead, they would, individually, put on a great act. And that is exactly what frequently happens. Everyone is acting pleased, but the reality is that no one is truly happy. Result: cooperation is not what it could, or should, be. And so the company falters.

8. Getting these Three Dimensions in Place

How will the rah-rah motivators undo the natural differences between people? What will the silver-bullet people do for the boss’s need to ensure the employees’ 7 parameters for happiness on the job? When will the quick-fix boys and girls address controlling emotions? Unless a handle is in place for each, people behaviours in the company will return to, or remain in, their bad old ways because root cause will not have been found and rectified. And cooperation pays the price – the unnecessary price!

The thorough answer lies, not in this paper but in more information about how to get these three dimensions in order. The overview answers are to:

- Create a *Safe Environment* where different personality types are not only tolerated but encouraged.
- Change the workplace philosophy to cater to the 7 employee barriers to happiness on the job.
- Set up a mechanism for people to defuse emotions and let logic prevail.

In all of these, good intentions are not enough. Some systems have to be introduced to make cooperation a continuing part of your corporate agenda.

Methods for addressing all of these, to turn destructive conflict into constructive, are available from CCCC. But, that is not our point. **Our point is that the quick-fix to team cooperation does not work; getting to root causes does.** So our advice to you is for you to address all three dimensions in a serious way. We suggest you enlist assistance from a company that understands the essence of the real human drivers of behaviour along with a demonstrated track record for making cooperation work. Avoid wasting your time and money looking for an easy, cheap, fix.

Good luck to you.

Bill Caswell

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