



# UNIT-1

## Establishing Team Norms

### Learning Outcomes

**By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:**

- ✓ Discuss the value of working as a team.
- ✓ Identify how to develop team norms, ground rules, and team contracts.

## Unit 1

### Establishing Team Norms

#### What is a Team?

We like Glenn Parker's definition of a team: "A group of people with a high degree of interdependence geared toward the achievement of a goal or the completion of a task." (From "Team Players and Teamwork" by Glenn Parker)

#### What Does That Mean?

This means that members of a team agree on a goal and agree that the only way to achieve that goal is to work together. Some groups have a common goal but they don't work together to achieve it. For example, many teams are really groups because they work independently to achieve their goal. Some groups work together but they don't have a common goal.

#### Types of Teams

Knowing the type of team you are in can help you choose how to plan your work and what you expect as outcomes. Teams are everywhere, and their role as part of an organizational framework continues to evolve just as businesses and marketplaces do. From a practical perspective, most of us belong to multiple teams, with sometimes competing priorities.

Let's look at some of the most common types of teams.

#### Natural Work Groups

This is a group of people who work together each day in the same location, using the same machines and processes. The supervisor is in charge, but they may allow other team members to take the leadership role.

#### Business Team

Often a cross-functional team that looks after a specific product line or service.

#### Management Team

A group of managers and the person they mutually report to. Within a single organization, there can be different levels of management teams (executive, middle, and front-line, for example).

#### Self-Managed Team

This is a group of people who manage themselves. No one person in the group has the authority to make all the decisions about the events that impact the group. This is also referred to as a **self-directed** work team because everyone has authority and responsibility for all the decisions they have to make.

### Product/Service Design Teams

This is a group that comes together for a specific time to work on a special project or task. This group has traditionally been called a **task force** or **committee**. They are usually a cross-functional group assigned to design or redesign a product or service.

### Virtual and Remote Teams

With this type of team, members see one another in person rarely or not at all. They connect most frequently using web portals, the Internet, telephone, and e-mail. What makes these teams different (and sometimes challenging) is that they have to work together to accomplish goals, but they may not know each other that well. They can also fit any of the models listed above.

### Test Your Knowledge

Into which model does your team fit?

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Why do you feel that way?

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How would you define your team?

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What model would be the ideal one for your work together?

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**Why?**

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**Establishing Team Norms**

**Team Norms**

All teams, whether they know it or not, have norms, rules, or guidelines that guide the behavior of team members. In most cases they are not written down: they are simply understood because that’s the way the team always operates.

For example, if the group always starts ten minutes late, team members will adjust their behavior to start ten minutes late. If someone has their reports ready ahead of time and e-mails it to the grateful minute taker, others will follow suit.

Norms can be positive and thus help the team be an effective organization. For example, all team members show up on time for team meetings. Norms can also be counterproductive, such as when excessive joking and side conversations prevent a meeting from being productive.

Some teams spend time establishing a set of norms or ground rules before they begin their work.

**Characteristics of Teams**

Advantages	Disadvantages


**The Advantages of Teams**

The way decisions are made is a major factor in the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with work. Individuals are much less likely to be dissatisfied with decisions that they were involved in making.

The "strange ideas" that others bring into decision-making discussions are one of the very reasons you would want input from others. If everyone thought the same way as the team leader, there would be no point in discussing the matter.

Although discussions can bring misunderstandings, they provide an opportunity for the team leader to provide clarification and avoid potential problems when it comes time to implement decisions.

The biases that team members bring can also be helpful. Biases are based on previous experience, on what has worked or not worked in the past, or on assumptions. It is useful to understand the resistance against a course of action in case something has been overlooked. Besides, if someone is resisting an action, it is better to hear them out and deal with their resistance than have them sabotage your later efforts to implement the decision.

Self-interests are often based on the desire to have decisions result in what is best for them. If this is consistent with what is also best for the organization, these can be valuable viewpoints to hear.

**How Can Teams Help Employees Grow?**

Team decision-making provides learning and personal growth experiences. Decision making challenges you to think; to try to understand facts, alternatives, and how different jobs affect one another; to see the bigger picture. Participation in decision making makes people better decision makers.

Teams increase employee autonomy. Employees require less management time when they accept responsibility for their own work and for making their own decisions.

Teams also increase receptivity and trust of management decisions. When teams get involved in decision making, they develop an appreciation for the fact that solutions are not as simple as they might appear and that it is not so easy to choose among options. As a result, they become more accepting of decisions





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**Evaluate the way the team is working.**

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**Examine how the group handles agreement and conflict, and how group members relate to one another.**

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**Important Factors in Team Development**

**Commitment**

Members of the team can set their personal aspirations or ideals aside as part of their commitment to ensure the group goals are achieved.

**Trust**

Team members have solid relationships with one another. They also have faith that each member of the team will honor commitments and wholly support one another while working in a predictable, consistent way.

**Purpose**

The team has been oriented to understand their roles, level, or ownership, and see how they fit into the overall strategic plan for the organization.

**Communication**

Teams that communicate well save a lot of time by handling day to day exchanges as well as managing conflict, making decisions, and leveraging strong relationships to get their work completed.

### **Involvement**

By its nature and title, team work means that everyone has a role and commits to working as partners, despite differences they may have.

### **Process Orientation**

Process orientation helps the team to work together. Processes can include problem solving methods, planning techniques, meeting schedules complete with agendas and minutes, and a defined conflict resolution method.

## **Team Contracts**

A team contract outlines the ground rules for the team. It is created and then monitored by the team. Some people get offended by the idea of a team contract; it's not ideal in every situation. We have included a sample contract below. Each team member should sign and date the contract.

### **Sample Team Contract** **Code of Conduct**

As a team we will:

- Be proactive and positive
- Keep other team members informed
- Focus on what is best for the team as a whole

### **Ground Rules**

We will:

- Be respectful, fair, and honest in all communications
- Encourage opinions and discussion from all members
- Be open to new approaches and listen to new ideas
- Look at conflict and change positively
- Work together to achieve maximum results
- Follow best practices for decision making, communication, and meeting management
- Celebrate accomplishments and milestones

### **Meeting Guidelines**

- Each meeting begins and ends on time
- Team has an agenda for every meeting and sticks to it
- Team members agree to prepare for meetings
- Cell phones will be muted (or perhaps not, if you are encouraging people to openly participate, share their thoughts, and accept the prevalence of these devices in the workplace)

## Working as a Team

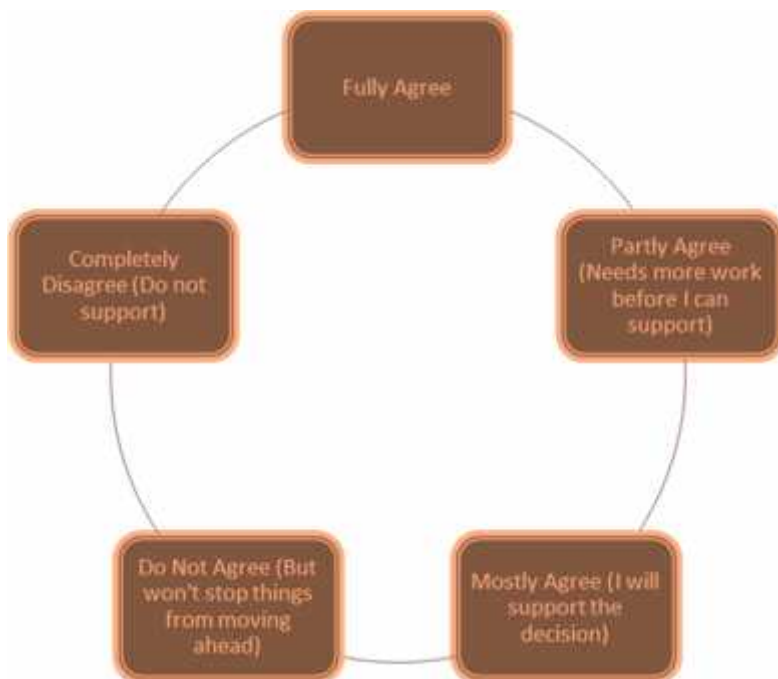
Success in the workplace depends on your ability to build a team and to interact with others on that team. Together, people can accomplish what one person alone cannot; this is called **synergy**.

However, it isn't always easy. Sometimes when we think about controversial subjects, our first response is to try to get away, or to make your involvement as short as possible. We have another way to look at agreements and disagreement, and that is to look at how strongly you feel about something instead of having to choose a firm position on one side or the other.

### No Need for Black and White Thinking

As team members, we need some way to take the temperature and find out where people stand on an issue. This is a great tool to put on the flip chart, overhead, or just provide as a handout. It can help people decide where they stand on an issue. The Degrees of Support can help a team leader or member explain that consensus does not mean that everyone agrees to the same degree. The circular nature of the diagram (which reflects the symbol for degree, or °) demonstrates how we may increase or decrease the strength of our commitment to a decision in response to getting more information, considering a different perspective, and moving through the area of disagreement.

### Degrees of Support



Little in life is really that clear that it needs to be discussed in terms of an absolute yes or no. Like the diagram, we really consider things in terms of degrees. Making agreements or clearing out conflict allows us to do the same thing.

The team leader can also ask questions of team members, such as “What changes to the project/task/plan do you need to have implemented in order to move toward agreement?”

## Characteristics of Great Teams

### The 12 Characteristics

These 12 characteristics of effective teams were developed by Glenn Parker, who has devoted his life’s work to studying and developing teams. For the remainder of the afternoon and part of tomorrow, the group will look at some of these characteristics.

- Clear purpose
- Informality
- Participation
- Listening
- Civilized disagreements
- Consensus decisions
- Open communication
- Clear roles and work assignments
- Shared leadership
- External relations
- Style diversity
- Self-assessment

### Clear Purpose

It can be frustrating to be part of a group with no clear idea of why you are there or what you should be doing. Do your team members know and accept the vision or mission of the organization? Are they part of the goal setting for the department or unit?

A clear purpose will set the direction for the team. Without it, the team could easily question why they exist, and what they are supposed to accomplish. Part of the team forming stage should include defining goals and outlining objectives.

### Informality and Participation

With high-performance teams, we encourage and nurture an environment that leads to greatest results. This means that a climate that is informal and comfortable, even relaxed, is encouraged. The team is observed to ensure that frustrations caused by boredom or personality conflict are dealt with so that participation levels remain high. As leaders, we encourage teams to interact comfortably and easily. We encourage lots of good-natured conversation and laughter.

Seating arrangements can facilitate this. A circle is usually the best seating arrangement so that people face one another, and a typical classroom arrangement is the worst where they have backs to one another.

## Listening

High performance teams focus on using effective communication techniques, particularly listening and asking questions.

**Active listening** means that we try to understand things from the speaker's point of view. It includes letting the speaker know that we are listening and that we have understood what was said. This is not the same as **hearing**, which is a physical process, where sound enters the eardrum and messages are passed to the brain. Active listening can be described as an attitude that leads to listening for shared understanding.

When we make a decision to listen for total meaning, we listen for the content of what is being said as well as the attitude behind what is being said. Is the speaker happy, angry, excited, sad...or something else entirely?

To improve your listening skills, use these tips:

- **Make a decision to listen.** Close your mind to clutter and noise and look at the person speaking with you. Give them your undivided attention.
- **Don't interrupt** people. Make it a habit to let them finish what they are saying. Respect that they have thoughts they are processing and speaking about, and wait to ask questions or make comments until they have finished.
- Keep your **eyes** focused on the speaker and your **ears** tuned to their voice. Don't let your eyes wander around the room, just in case your attention does too.
- Carry a **notebook** or start a conversation file on your computer. Write down all the discussions that you have in a day. Capture the subject, who spoke more (were you listening or doing a lot of the talking?), what you learned in the discussion, as well as the who, what, when, where, why, and how aspects of it. Once you have conducted this exercise 8-10 times, you will be able to see what level your listening skills are currently at.
- Ask a few **questions** throughout the conversation. When you ask, people will know that you are listening to them, and that you are interested in what they have to say. Your ability to summarize and paraphrase will also demonstrate that you heard them.
- When you demonstrate good listening skills, they tend to be **infectious**. If you want people to communicate well at work, you have to set a high example.

## Civilized Disagreements and Consensus

### Definitions

A civilized disagreement means what it sounds like: we can have a disagreement, but we're not going to let it ruin our relationship, nor are we going to behave badly while we work through it. We explain our positions, and even agree to disagree.

For important decisions, the goal is substantial (but not necessarily unanimous) agreement through open discussion of everyone's ideas and avoidance of formal voting or easy compromises.

One important element of achieving consensus is that you work toward a proposal or solution that all members will support and that no one will oppose. This is not the same as a unanimous vote since consensus doesn't have to reflect first priorities; the principles are not opposed and are fully supported by the group.

A resolution where everyone is totally satisfied requires these elements:

- Time
- Active participation of all group members
- Skills in communication (such as listening, conflict resolution, and facilitation)
- Creative thinking and open-mindedness
- Ideas to be heard and understood

## Test Your Knowledge

### The Perfect Menu

The CEO of your company has just decided to diversify from the core business and open a chain of restaurants. Your team's job is to design the perfect dinner menu for business clients, with an appetizer, main course, dessert, house wine, and one additional option.

#### Appetizer

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#### Main Course

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#### Dessert

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#### House Wine

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#### Additional Option

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## Open Communication

Team players can encourage open communication and trust by being dependable, pitching in and helping out, reading and responding to verbal cues, and candidly sharing views. The basic principles of good communication include the following items.

### Objective

You should have an end result or objective clearly in mind before communicating. Examine your purpose. What specifically do you want the receiver to understand or to do, as a result of the communication?

### Method

What's the best method for achieving your objective? Obviously, some communication methods or channels are better than others for a given objective. Weigh the alternatives (written or oral, group or individual, formal or informal) before selecting a specific method such as a letter, memo, meeting, telephone call, or e-mail.

### Structure

How you organize and construct your communication is very important to its success. There are many considerations: How much or how little to cover? What's the best way to organize the message? How can you keep it simple and concise, yet complete? How can you gear it to your audience's needs (frame of reference)?

### Feedback

In order to ensure that your message has been understood and to evaluate the emotions of your receiver (how does he/she feel about it?), you should encourage frequent responses.

## Clear Roles and Assignments

We have outlined the 12 characteristics of effective teams. Remember that the first seven characteristics were:

- Clear purpose
- Informality
- Participation
- Listening
- Civilized disagreements
- Consensus decisions
- Open communication

The next characteristic is clear roles and assignments. This is facilitated by making sure that each team member understands what they are to do, and how what they do fits into the bigger picture. Work is distributed fairly throughout the team, and action plans are completed.

**Leader's Expectation Checklist**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Explanation</b>	<b>Rating (1-10)</b>
<b>Work Methods</b>	Understanding our leader's expectations regarding required work methods and procedures when completing jobs or projects.	
<b>Time Frames</b>	Understanding due dates for the completion of projects; determining when dates have slipped and which completion dates are final and nonnegotiable.	
<b>Work Responsibilities</b>	Understanding each team member's role when we are assigned to a given job or responsibility.	
<b>Customer/Supplier Interface</b>	Understanding our leader's expectations when dealing with supplier problems or customer complaints or requests; understanding how far we should go to build effective relationships with other work groups.	
<b>Work Priorities</b>	Understanding which jobs take priority and the changes in work priorities; being able to clearly differentiate between hot jobs and other jobs.	
<b>Performance Expectations</b>	Understanding what our leader expects in the way of desired outcomes, what it means to do a good job, and the degree of effort we are expected to put into a job (as opposed to overworking low-priority jobs).	
<b>Resources</b>	Understanding what resources (facilities, support staff, equipment, software, and budget) have been allocated to perform a job and how much control we have over resource decisions.	

**Shared Leadership**

Being a leader doesn't mean doing it all yourself. Nor does it mean always being the one out in front. Shared leadership is an idea to consider when working in team environments.

## Test Your Knowledge

**What are some benefits of sharing the work of leadership?**

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**What are some possible disadvantages of shared leadership?**

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The key to shared leadership is communication. If several (or all) members of the group are going to share in leading the group, they must agree on where they are going and how they are going to get there. They must also communicate along the way to make sure they are on track, and to resolve any problems that arise.

As an example, let's look at a traditional construction team. Typically, you have a supervisor (or foreman). This person directs the rest of the workers to get the construction project accomplished. Now, let's say that this team decided to use shared leadership and eliminate the supervisor's position. Without communication, this could be a disaster. You would probably end up in a situation where one person is laying carpet before painting has been completed. However, if the team meets each morning and lays out responsibilities and plans together, this shared leadership formula might work very well for them.

## Your Team Player Type

**What's Your Team Player Type?**

There are many ways to discuss the personality types of people that we work and play with. Whether you use initials like the MBTI (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator), colors like Personality Dimensions,

edutainment like True Colors, the names of animals, or Greek philosophers, the idea is that there are base temperaments that we can relate to, and that we prefer. The science behind this kind of assessment relates back to the work of Carl Jung. It has been substantiated through tens of thousands of people who have completed and validated the questionnaires.

**Scoring Example**

Add the total number of points that you wrote beside each letter of the alphabet in the questionnaire. Pay close attention, since the letters are not always in order!

**Scale**

- 4 = Most like you
- 3 = A lot like you
- 2 = Somewhat like you
- 1 = Least like you

**Terms**

1. A driving need for you is:

<b>3</b>	C	To find meaning in life
<b>4</b>	A	To learn and gain knowledge
<b>2</b>	B	To belong
<b>1</b>	D	Freedom to do what you want

**Scoring**

<b>A</b>	
<b>B</b>	
<b>C</b>	
<b>D</b>	

**Your Score**

<b>A</b>	
<b>B</b>	
<b>C</b>	

<b>D</b>	
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Total A's \_\_\_\_\_ Total B's \_\_\_\_\_ Total C's \_\_\_\_\_ Total D's \_\_\_\_\_

**The letter with the highest total is most like you. Write it here:** \_\_\_\_\_

The other letters are your next preferred styles. If your numbers are close to each other (within 5 points), you probably find it pretty easy to flex your style to those other categories. If your numbers are far apart, or one is much lower than the others, that is the area you will find it challenging to work within. You'll have the knowledge of how to do it once you work through the material below.

## What Does it Mean To Have a Number?

In reality, we are a blend of all types, moving within the numbers and flexing into the other styles that our circumstances and our comfort levels dictate. This means that we are more like a blended drink than distinct ingredients. You'll recognize that you may behave one way at work (super organized, for example), and might be more relaxed at home, but return to your super organized self when stress at home increases.

As you read the descriptions below, see if they agree with how you behave as a member of your team at work, whether you are in meetings or working on a project. You'll also get some insight into how to connect with the different types in the descriptions.

### Mostly A's – Inquiring Rationals

Inquiring Rationals are often **drawn to jobs like banking and engineering**. They like to figure out how things work. They consider the structure and configuration of things. They process information intuitively and look at the big picture. These are visionaries, like Albert Einstein and Bill Gates. When it is time to make decisions, they apply logic, and they don't get persuaded by emotions. If they don't respect you, you won't keep their attention. Experience and competency are very important to Inquiring Rationals.

This temperament profile makes up approximately **5 to 7% of the population**. Other notables in this group are Walt Disney, Ben Franklin, Margaret Thatcher, and Napoleon. To connect with Inquiring Rationals on your team, demonstrate your expertise in your work.

**As a member of the team**, you are the person who keeps track of things, most often with checklists and guidelines. You can be counted on to know what the assignment is and when it is due. You get frustrated with team members who are not big on details, or who want to try something new. You like to follow a recipe and you know where your tools are. You probably don't like surprises very much.

Most of the time you complete assignments in a timely and efficient manner, with all the needed detail. You also share the information and materials you have with other members of the team, and provide the technical training or background that they need. People usually see you as dependable, systematic, proficient, practical, and efficient.

Too much logic might mean that you are demonstrating some rigidity. Tap into your sense of humor and try to keep other people's styles in mind, especially if you are leading a team. You may go into data overload with long reports, push for unrealistic standards, and tend to lose patience with team climate and process issues.

### **Mostly B's – Authentic Idealists**

Authentic Idealists are **natural teachers, counselors, and leaders**. They are benevolent and intuitive, and they focus on global issues like world poverty and humanitarian issues. Idealists love metaphors, stories, and symbols, rather than statistics and figures. They make decisions that reflect their values, and rely on emotion and instinct as opposed to logic. In fact, statistics and facts bore them. They are looking for significance, and they seek the truth.

The Authentic Idealist temperament makes up about **10% of the population**. Notable members of this group include Eleanor Roosevelt, Billy Graham, Mahatma Gandhi, Jane Goodall, Oprah Winfrey, and Albert Schweitzer.

Authentic Idealists are people-oriented. They don't want to rock the boat, and their focus is on having everyone in harmony on the team. They can focus more on people's feelings than results. They will step in to resolve process problems (for example, with conflict or lack of involvement), listen attentively while withholding judgment, and offer praise and recognition to other team members.

**To connect with the Authentic Idealists on your team**, share your values and personal convictions. Be authentic and reach out to them by telling stories that demonstrate your empathy. Appeal to personal ethics and a higher calling. Show that you care about them and each person in the room. Authentic Idealists are more interested in how much you care than how much you can cite statistics.

**If your teamwork style is that of an Authentic Idealist, your strengths include** making deep connections with your team at an emotional and personal level. You motivate and encourage. You're a good storyteller, so you find innovative ways to present your information. You have wisdom to share and are eager to do so. Your lack of ego about what you know makes you likeable. You have a sincere enthusiasm and empower people to act. People see you as encouraging, enthusiastic, supportive, humorous, and relaxed.

**Areas for development include** a tendency to be overly sensitive to others. You're intuitive and will interpret meaning behind everything. This also means that you can get distracted by reactions of other individual in the audience, and that can make you lose track. You may see team processes as an end to themselves and fail to challenge or contradict other team members. Make sure that you are well prepared for areas you are responsible for, and that you accommodate other members of the team by being sufficiently serious and aware of the bottom line.

### Mostly C's – Organized Guardians

Organized Guardians are extremely **dependable and loyal**, and they play by the rules. They have an amazing work ethic, stay down-to-earth, and they like routine. They are thorough and orderly. At times they are too serious, but they are practically always serious. They are good at taking care of other people. They want to hear about the bottom line, and they want the facts.

Organized Guardians will consider charts and graphs and follow a well prepared presentation longer than most people, but they can shut down when too much emotion is presented and may get bored with stories. This temperament makes up **40 to 45% of the population** and includes people like Queen Elizabeth II, Mother Teresa, George Washington, and Colin Powell. With their respect for tradition, they are drawn to the military and policing. These are also the people who will pass traditions to their children and grandchildren.

**To connect with Organized Guardians on your team**, be concise, organized, and support statements with data. Present information in a logical sequence, and don't wander off down a tangent. Quote other experts. Expect, and encourage, them to collaborate.

**If you are an Organized Guardian as a team member**, you will be very logical and organized. You'll take notes, and you'll know how to find them. You're a big picture thinker, looking for the better way to do things. You can be persuasive, and you don't need to be tied down by excessive details. You see the vision, mission, and goals of the team as paramount. You are flexible to new ideas and willing to help out even in areas outside of your defined roles. You are willing to share in the limelight with the members of the team. You work hard to meet your objectives. People usually describe you as forward-thinking, cooperative, independent, flexible, and imaginative.

**Your weaknesses can be predictability.** The data will be there, but you may have to remind yourself (repeatedly) to give the group opportunities for self-discovery and application. Draw on your compassion for others to add emotional depth to your work and an appreciation of the strengths of others. Sometimes you may be tempted to publicly complain about team failures. Resist the urge! You may overlook the mission at times by being too future oriented, or lose sight of tasks. Resist the urge to dream, and get on with the doing.

### Mostly D's – Resourceful Artisans

Resourceful Artisans **crave action and live in the moment.** They are very social, confident, and persuasive. Donald Trump, Steven Spielberg, and Madonna are notable Resourceful Artisans. They're witty, playful, and fun. If they had a message to share, it would be that the world could lighten up a little. Like Organized Guardians, they can also perceive the world concretely. They can get bored with visionary tasks. They enjoy stories that they can easily relate to and imagine happening to them. This temperament makes up about **35% of the population.**

**To connect with Resourceful Artisans**, be real and spontaneous. Engage them with questions and discussion. Be prepared for them to challenge your ideas, and at times, authority. They will play the devil’s advocate and look for weak links in anyone’s argument.

**If you’re Resourceful Artisan, your strengths include** energy, personality, and creativity. Build in some interaction when you present your work to leverage your spontaneity. You are a natural storyteller, so tell some stories. You will encourage action, and you have good listening skills, so you are responsive to your team. While most people will appreciate your candor, it may take some practice before you know when to back off an issue. You will challenge the team to take well-considered risks and push them toward high ethical standards. People usually see you as candid, honest, principled, assertive, and ethical.

**Your weaknesses** can show up in your organization and structure. Because you are living in the moment, you might avoid the homework that goes into the development of a brilliant report or presentation. You might avoid preparation and be willing to rely on spontaneity, but then you are less focused on content. Be careful not to be so spontaneous that you miss a good opportunity to deliver a powerful message. You can be too direct in communicating with other team members, and sometimes become rigid and inflexible. Avoid painting yourself into a corner by knowing when to back off.

**What’s Important?**

We all have preferences for how we do things, and now we hopefully understand a bit more about them. It’s also important to remember that we ALL have the range of preferences described here. You might be mostly A, but call on behaviors that are more closely associated with B, C, and/or D as needed. You might also be very close in your results to more than one type, so you’ll find it easier than other people to flex your own style in response to what the group needs.

It’s important to have a range of types in our workplace and on each team that we work with. The strength of having some people looking after facts and figures while others can appeal to emotions, spontaneity, or reinforce the importance of rules and tradition, makes our business effective. It’s the blend, that presence of different temperaments with in a multitude of strengths, which keeps our world fascinating.

**Test Your Knowledge**

**My Team Style**

**What are your individual strengths?**

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**What are your individual weaknesses?**

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**What are your team's strengths?**

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**What are your team's weaknesses?**

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**How can you shore up the weaknesses and leverage the strengths?**

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## Team Problem Solving

Armed with the information you have about your role as a leader and your team and how they might develop, think about some of the issues that you are dealing with as you work with your team.

## Team Leadership

A team leader may volunteer, be appointed, or be elected by team members. The team leader will:

- Stimulate enthusiasm.
- See that conflicts are resolved.
- Encourage communication and participation.
- Keep meetings in control.
- Ensure the team is making progress.

In order to develop openness and trust among team members and promote open communication, it should be understood that:

- There are no stupid questions.
- Team members must feel free to express all ideas.
- Team confidentiality is required.
- Team members' feelings are as important as the facts.
- It takes practice to develop tactful candor.

### **Characteristics of Team Players**

#### **Make every effort to be effective communicators.**

Most conflicts start because people misunderstand one another. This is often followed by someone jumping to conclusions and making incorrect assumptions. The team has great strength when all members are on the same track.

#### **Replace defensiveness with openness.**

People get defensive when they feel threatened. Let others know you respect their opinions, even if you don't agree with them. Establish an environment where people are free to speak their mind and understand how to do so effectively. Every idea deserves to be given a fair hearing.

#### **Team players understand the value of being assertive rather than aggressive.**

Even if you are angry and ready to blow your top, you probably understand that approach is not going to get what you need. You can satisfy your own needs without dominating others if you use openness, honesty, and peaceful negotiation to help everyone win a little bit.

#### **Avoid argument for the sake of argument.**

Arguments and power struggles can take a lot of valuable time. If an argument is going nowhere, resolve it by applying a conflict resolution strategy, or table it. Don't dwell on it. Personal ego gratification should take a backseat to team goals.

#### **Don't rain on someone else's parade.**

We all are proud of our own achievements and possessions. Belittling someone else's achievements just creates tension and hurt feelings. Sincere compliments, recognition, and support help to create synergy within the team. Support your co-workers and they will support you.

#### **Avoid contributing to doom and gloom.**

If you are a pessimist by nature, try to look at things from other angles and register the amount of good work going on. Pessimism drags down energy, productivity, and morale.

**Refuse to play games.**

Some people thrive on chaos and discord, but it takes two to play that game. If you refuse to play, malicious behaviors can be halted before they start. As a leader, it's also your job to call it when you see it and deal with difficult situations and conflict.

**Further Reading:**