

What Kind of Team Player Are You?

Part Four of Six

James L. C. Taggart

An effective team needs diversity in its membership, a combination of work and personality styles. The following four team player styles are not intended to be absolutes but rather preferences that people have towards how they work with others. Each style has a brief description of its strengths and weaknesses.

1. **The Doer** is very task-oriented and action-focused. Give him a job and he's happy. The *Doer* is good at research, reliable, meets deadlines, and produces good quality work. He operates by priorities and pushes the team towards higher performance. He can be effective at teaching technical skills.

The *Doer* dislikes uncertainty and ambiguity; is impatient; wants results immediately; can be too focused on data; is impulsive; strives for perfection; and tends to avoid risk. If the *Doer* is the leader, he must be especially careful of these weaknesses. One major problem can be a lack of trust in the team's members. Moreover, he must be aware of others' feelings and work at interpersonal and communication skills.

2. **The Visionary** sees the big picture and likes ideas and concepts. She lets the team's vision and mission be the driver. She doesn't like getting bogged down in details, leaving these to the *Doer*. She believes strongly in teamwork and is good at helping others understand where they fit in to the larger picture.

The *Visionary* is a creative thinker and stimulates others in thinking about the future. She takes a cooperative and flexible approach to working with others. However, she must pay attention to her weaknesses. She has a tendency to ignore work in favour of conceptualizing and dreaming about the future. She can get hung up on process instead of results. And she may over-commit the team to setting too many objectives

If she is the leader, the *Visionary* has a lot to offer the team, especially in the area of long-term strategic thinking. But she must be aware of her weaknesses.

3. **The Feeler** is a very strong context person, making sure that everyone is on board before proceeding with a task or project. He's very aware of how others feel and is an excellent listener and facilitator. He's skilled at resolving conflicts and won't let stronger members dominate team discussions.

The *Feeler* must be careful not to push the soft stuff too hard (i.e., listening and feedback skills) if the team gets bogged down. He believes that interpersonal skills will solve all problems. And he can become a process fanatic, driving the others to distraction.

If he is the leader, the *Feeler* creates a participative atmosphere. But his people approach can be over-bearing and he must not lose sight that disputes are normal and healthy for teams.

4. The *Boat Rocker* is open and direct with the other members of the team. She regularly challenges the team on such issues as methods used, goals, and team values. She won't hesitate to disagree with the team's leader or with management. She likes to take calculated risks. However, the *Boat Rocker* must be careful not to use her style for non-productive use. It's necessary at times to let an issue drop. Moreover, she shouldn't push the team to take unnecessary risks.

As the team's leader, she's good at promoting an atmosphere of trust and openness; innovation; and continuous learning. However, she needs to watch out for being too argumentative.

The Challenge

Each of us has a personality preference to how we approach work, establish relationships with co-workers, and engage in collaborative learning. In the context of team players, the challenge is for each of us to understand our preferred style and to use it effectively. This means being constantly aware of the shadow (weak) aspects of our preferred style. Moreover, we must strive for balance by using all four styles in the appropriate settings.