Platinum Rule Group Report
The Natural Cycle of Groups

Work groups typically follow a cycle, just like the organizations which spawn them. They face predictable obstacles, rise to the occasion or fail, and as a result, either evolve or deteriorate. At every stage in that cycle, each of the various behavioral styles can be a help or a hindrance.

Phase One: FINDING FOCUS

Any new group at first gropes to find its focus. Members of the group ask, or at least think: Is this going to be worth the effort? Is this going to be a useful team that can get things done? Or is it just another group holding yet more meetings aimed at producing another report that nobody reads?

In addition, each member at this point is seeking to define his or her role. They silently ask: "Do I fit in here, or am I an outsider?" "Am I going to be an important member of this group with real input, or am I just here for appearances?" "Is this going to waste my time?" **Thinkers** and **Directors** can be especially helpful during this first phase. They are both skilled at getting to the heart of matters, though in different ways. If the challenges the group faces are intellectually complex, the **Thinker** will be in his element. Because they're so good at reasoned analysis on tasks, **Thinkers** they can help clarify the mission and give the team focus.

Similarly, if the main hurdle the group faces is more of a conflict-say, a history of discord among members and/or a split over its goals-a **Director** likely will shine. In fact, the group may be yearning for just a strong leader who can tell the warring members to quit butting heads and either commit, or leave. That's a situation ready-made for the **Director**. In either case, the **Thinker** or **Director** may be able to get the group to psychologically buy into the idea of moving forward together, to convince the team that there's a "plan" and progress will be possible.

Phase Two: FACING THE REALITIES

While a tough-minded **Thinker** or **Director** may get the group going, this stormy second stage often cries out for the buoyant optimism of the **Socializers**. Their friendly, informal brand of leadership can send out a strong, clear signal that this group can work together and make things better for everybody. A people-oriented approach is needed at this stage because not just the team's internal dynamics but also external issues must be addressed here. It's at this point that reality often intrudes. The group may begin to see how difficult its task really is, how little time and resources are available, and how members may need to settle for a half a loaf rather than a stunning breakthrough.

All these factors can breed frustration, confusion, and disillusionment. This is when it'll be decided if the group tackles the real issues in meaningful ways, or gets mired in its own internal power struggle. That's why **Socializers**, who are good at smoothing over rough edges and encouraging all to share their thoughts and feelings, can be a key here. Many groups, of course, never transcend this them-versus-us mindset. They're continuing to silently debate: "Who's the 'top dog?'" "Who stands to gain the most and who'll likely come up the loser?" Such a team isn't likely to accomplish much. Instead, members will continuously collide with one another, limiting themselves as a team and as individuals.

But if the **Socializer**, with his or her upbeat attitude and people skills, can get the members to quit keeping score, they may yet learn to work together. If the **Socializer** can convince them that who's in charge is less important than who has what know-how and attitudes, the group will have entered the next phase.

Phase Three: COMING TOGETHER

Cooperation and collaboration become increasingly apparent, and it's now that **Relaters** can give the group a boost. Because they are especially good at coalescing differing views, the **Relaters** help meld individual differences into group progress. By opening their hearts and heads to one another, the **Relaters**, or others with **Relater**-like behavior, can blend the discordant elements into more of a single melody. The team begins to narrow the gap between what it earlier said it wanted to do and what it's actually doing. There's been a shift of identity, and it's become a true team because members who previously thought in terms of "me," begin thinking "we."

Phase Four: REACHING FOR STARDOM

The final stage is more the exception than the rule. But, when reached, it means a team really is performing at its best and highest use; that it's functioning as a whole, not just as a collection of individuals. Its members enjoy being part of the team and express that fact. They've learned how to work together. Morale is high. The group continually produces quality and quantity output and is effectively self-managing. In the previous three stages, **Director**-type behavior might have been called for on key decisions. But at this stage, a hands-on, controlling style isn't needed. In fact, once a group has this momentum, such a strong-handed style can be counterproductive and could even torpedo the group's progress. Instead, the team's decisions flow naturally from its deliberations. Differences among its members become a source of strength, not dispute.

Platinum Rule Group Report - eGraph
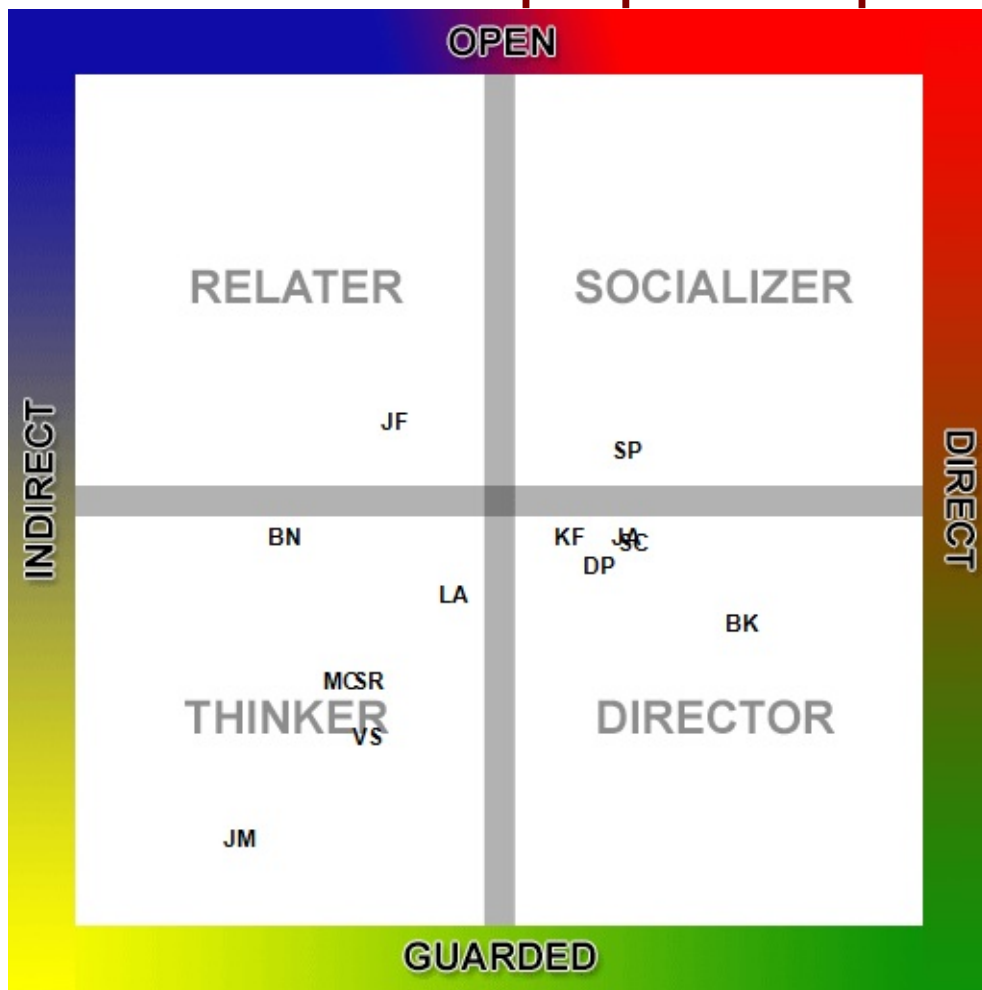
Graph key is located on the next page

Initials	Name	Style
JA	Joe Alexander	Director
LA	Lyle Allen	Thinker
MC	Mike Calvert	Thinker
SC	Suzette Chaparro	Director
JF	James Family	Relater
KF	Ken Fowler	Director
BK	Becky Kendall	Director
JM	John MacPhie	Thinker
BN	Bill Nelson	Thinker
SP	Sample Parker	Socializer
DP	Demo Person	Director
SR	Sample Report	Thinker
VS	Victor Santos	Thinker