

Principles of Developing, Managing and Leading Individuals and Teams to Achieve Success

Lesson 3





The Challenges of Teamworking

**The challenges
involved in
managing teams**

**The importance of
maintaining good
communication
when working with
teams**

**The importance
of inclusivity and
fairness to ensure
effective team
performance**



Challenges of Teamworking

Teamworking can be hugely rewarding and can help you reach goals that would be impossible to achieve alone. However, it also brings its own unique set of challenges.

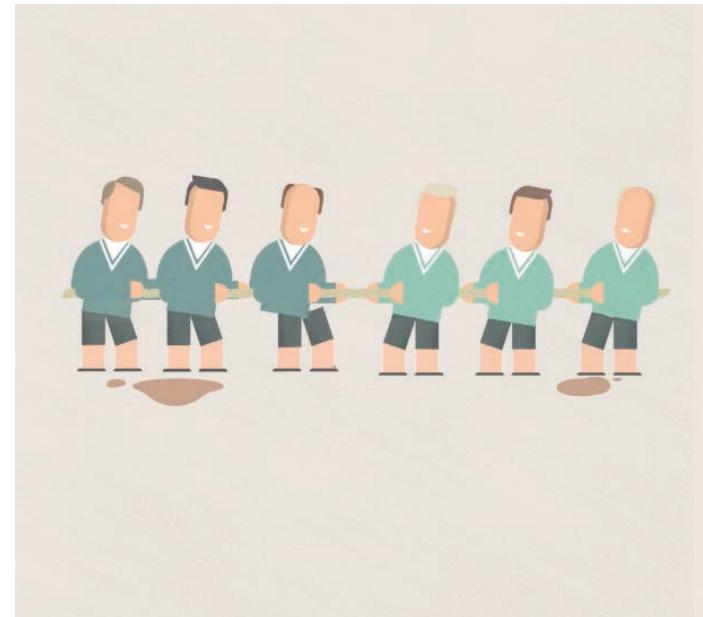
Let's take a look at some of the problems that teams can face.



The Ringelmann Effect

The first challenge relates to effort. In a landmark experiment carried out at the beginning of the 20th century, French agricultural engineer Max Ringelmann took a rope and asked individuals to pull on it. He then asked the same people to pull on the rope as a group.

He observed that when people pulled in a group, they put in less effort than when they did it on their own. He also noted that as the size of the group increased, individual effort declined, and people became less productive. This phenomenon is known as ‘the Ringelmann effect.’

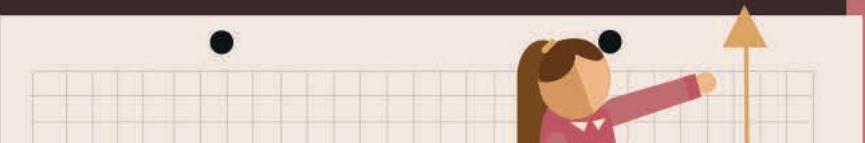




Groupthink

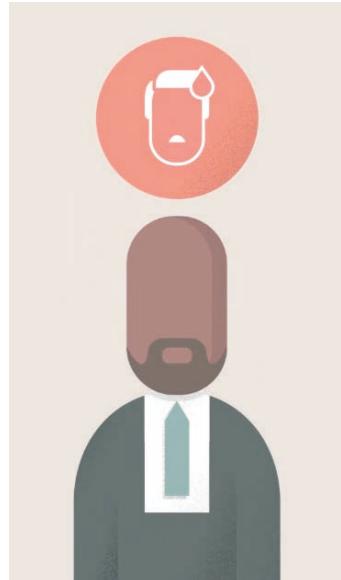
Another problem behaviour that sometimes occurs in teams is known as Groupthink.

This concept was developed by American academic Irving Janis in the 1970s. Groupthink occurs when pressure to conform and reach a consensus with the rest of the group leads team members to set aside their own beliefs and instead adopt the opinion of the team. This can sometimes make people agree to bad choices, rather than challenge them and risk upsetting the harmony of the group.

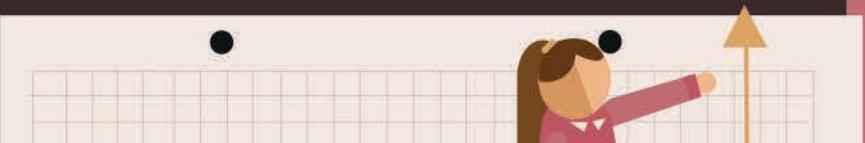


Risky Shift

Our third issue also relates to this kind of group mentality. In 1961, academic James Stoner coined the term 'Risky Shift' to describe his finding that people working in a team don't feel the same responsibility for their decisions as they do when making them as an individual.



Often, this means that teams will make much riskier decisions than any of the individual team members would make by themselves, because the risk is shared between them all. In other words, a decision made by everyone is the responsibility of no-one.

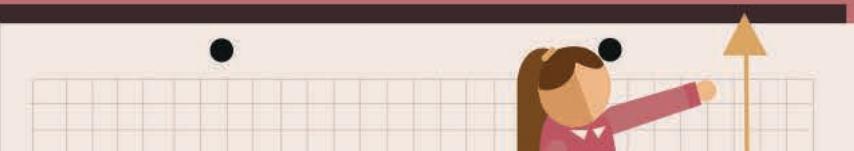


Scapegoating

A fourth problem behaviour relates to blame. Scapegoating can occur when something goes wrong and the team tries to pin the blame on one person rather than take responsibility as a group. Blame may fall on anyone - from the weakest team member up to the team leader. The prospect of scapegoating and taking the blame for a team's failures can make team members reluctant to contribute ideas, or even not to admit when mistakes have been made.

As a manager, you can help reduce the risk of each of these issues occurring by raising awareness of them among your team. If team members understand these effects, they can make a conscious effort to try and avoid them.



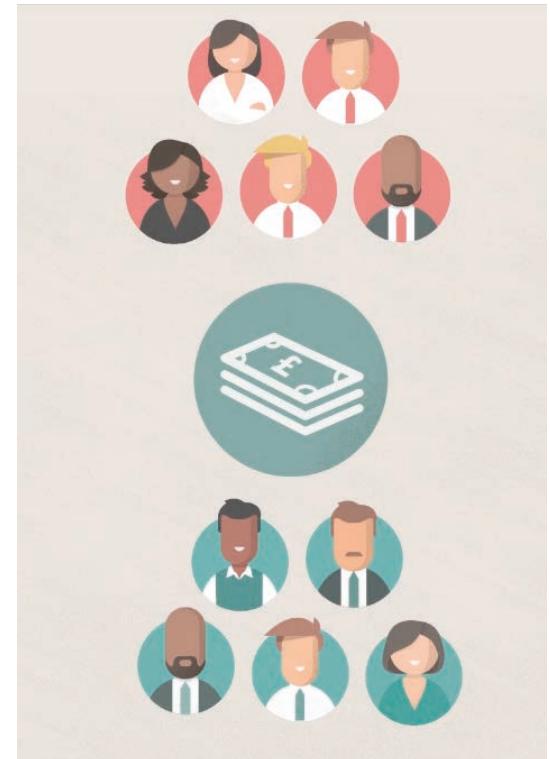


Inter-group Conflict

Finally, teamworking also creates the conditions for conflict to arise.

Sometimes this conflict will occur between teams - this is known as inter-group conflict. This is something to be particularly aware of when you are managing multiple teams.

Inter-group conflict may happen where teams are competing for the same resources within an organisation, such as funding for their projects.

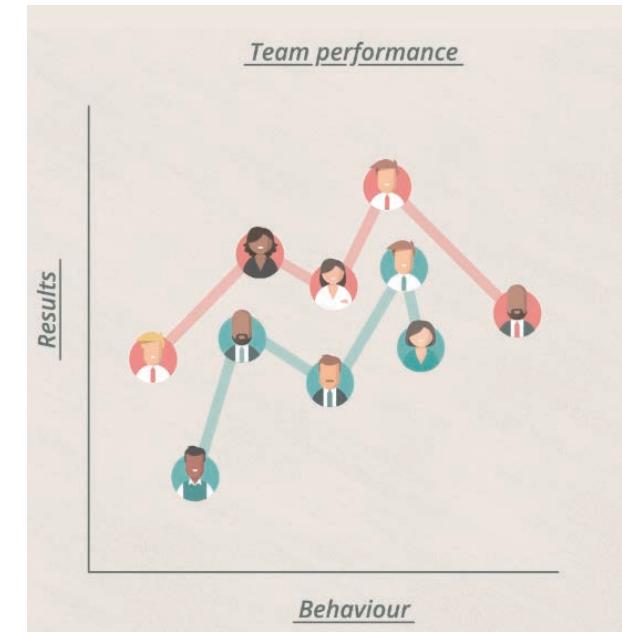




Inter-group Conflict (cont.)

It can also occur when an employer operates a bonus scheme in which the top-performing teams get the highest rewards.

Clearly, if this kind of conflict gets out of control it can have a detrimental impact on team performance. Teams could begin to undermine each other's work, for example, to try and secure access to resources or higher bonuses for themselves.





Intra-group Conflict

Other problems may arise within teams - this is known as intra-group conflict.

If two or more team members disagree about the best way to approach a task, for example, this can lead to arguments within the team - which could distract team members and disrupt their performance. Intra-group conflict can be distressing for team members and, in extreme cases, it could lead people to want to leave the team - or even the organisation - altogether.

However, while conflict is generally seen as a negative force, some researchers argue that a degree of conflict - if managed correctly - can actually be healthy for teams.



The 'Five Dysfunctions of a Team'

It's not possible to fully explore the challenges of managing and leading teams without considering the work of US author Patrick Lencioni - who spent several years researching the characteristics of underperforming teams.

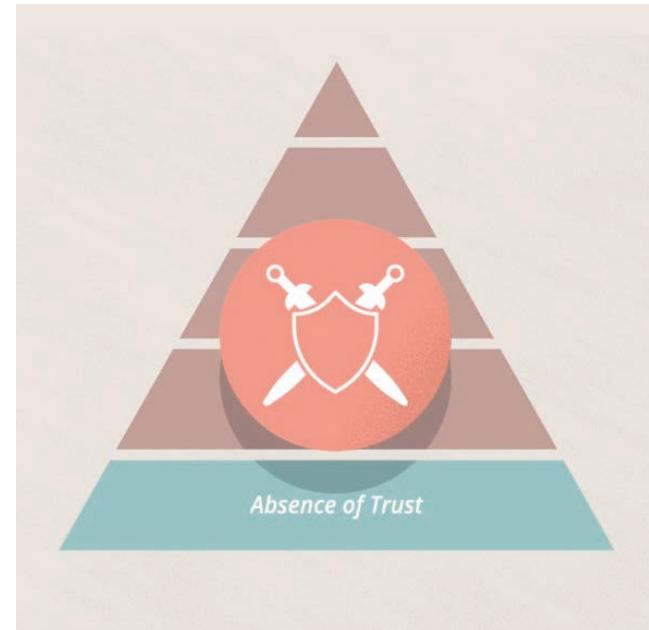
Lencioni used this research to develop one of the foremost models of how problems can develop within teams. Known as the 'Five Dysfunctions of a Team', his model identifies five ways in which poor team dynamics can negatively impact team performance. The model is typically drawn as a pyramid, as each dysfunction builds on the last. It begins with an Absence of Trust.

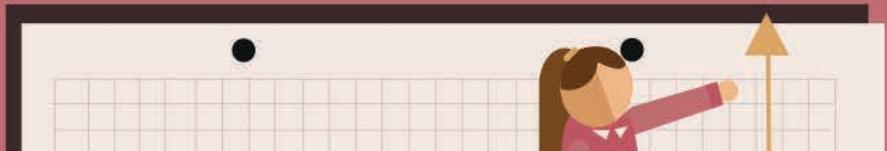


The ‘Five Dysfunctions of a Team’ (cont.)

According to Lencioni, trust is the foundation of teamwork and is critical to building a team. He argues that “members of great teams do not hold back with one another.”

Within teams that lack trust, members have no confidence in their colleagues’ intentions, they exhibit defensiveness, and they fail to open up to one another about their weaknesses and mistakes.





The 'Five Dysfunctions of a Team' (cont.)

In order to overcome this, Lencioni believes that a culture of trust can be fostered by creating opportunities for team members to share experiences in which everyone, including the leader, can demonstrate their competence and capabilities. At the same time, individuals can demonstrate their appreciation of each other's talents.

Teams that have an absence of trust may also demonstrate a Fear of Conflict. For Lencioni, disagreements and conflicts within a team are welcome. He argues that teams need to be able to engage in 'unfiltered and passionate debate of ideas', and that working through conflicts can strengthen a team. This echoes Tuckman's 'Storming' stage of team development that we saw in lesson 1.





The 'Five Dysfunctions of a Team' (cont.)

Without trust, team members won't engage in open discussion. Instead, they maintain what Lencioni calls a sense of 'artificial harmony'. True harmony exists when teams work through their conflicts - artificial harmony exists when these conflicts are not acknowledged.

Lencioni argues that teams should be trained to understand that conflict can be both productive and civil. The value of questioning, challenging and debating should be highlighted, and team members should be made aware of how these practices can pre-empt and solve problems, as well as boost innovation and creativity.



The 'Five Dysfunctions of a Team' (cont.)

An absence of trust and fear of conflict can be followed by a Lack of Commitment. If team members haven't been able to air their own ideas in open debate, they will rarely - if ever - get fully on board with the team's plans.

Again, Lencioni's solution to this issue is to encourage teams to be open and to take part in joint decision-making so that everyone takes ownership of the team's goals and fully supports what they are trying to achieve.





The 'Five Dysfunctions of a Team' (cont.)

If there is a lack of commitment within the team, its members may develop an Avoidance of Accountability.

As they have not fully committed to the team's chosen course of action, they won't be motivated to call each other out for poor performance. In contrast, Lencioni says that teams that fully trust each other, aren't afraid of conflict. They are all working towards the same goal and will have no difficulty holding each other to account if their standards slip.



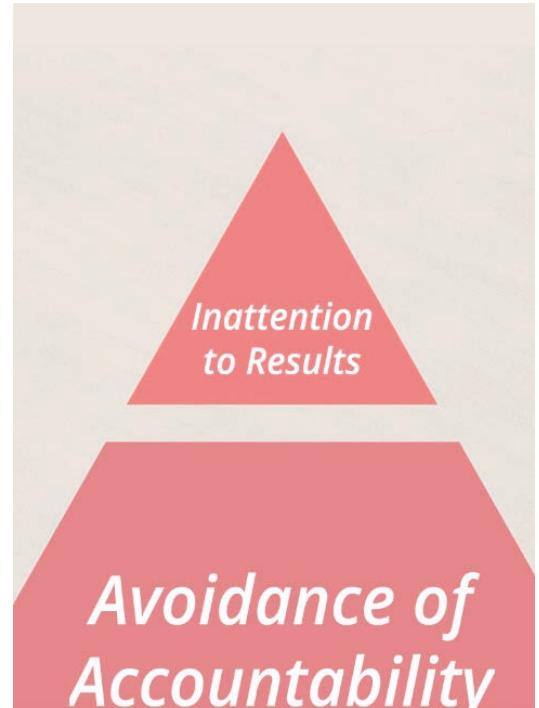


The 'Five Dysfunctions of a Team' (cont.)

The final dysfunction within Lencioni's model is an Inattention to Results.

This describes a tendency among the members of truly dysfunctional teams to seek out individual recognition at the expense of the team's overall results. They put their own career development or bonus payments above the team's collective goals - and they may even work against the team if it furthers their own personal ambitions.

So, perhaps a degree of conflict between and within teams can be healthy - a well-designed team bonus scheme can drive better performance, for example, while Lencioni is clear that teams that work through conflict can become stronger.



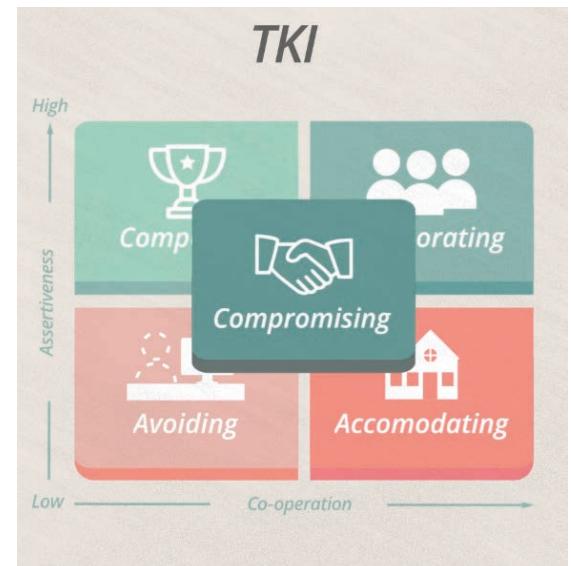


Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument

However, we can all agree that too much conflict is damaging.

So how can you keep on top of conflict and prevent it from spiralling out of control?

One of the best-known tools for managing conflict is the ‘Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument’, or TKI. Developed by management academics Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann in 1974, this model is still influential today.





Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (cont.)

The TKI identifies five different styles of how people deal with conflict and encourages team members to reflect on which style they tend to use. It helps to raise people's self-awareness of how they usually react to conflict and can prompt them to consider whether they need to adapt their approach to get better results.

According to Thomas and Kilmann, we're all capable of using these five styles to resolve conflict - but certain people use different styles better than others and tend to rely on these more.



Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (cont.)

The TKI maps the five conflict management styles across two axes. The vertical axis represents 'assertiveness', while the horizontal axis represents 'co-operation'.

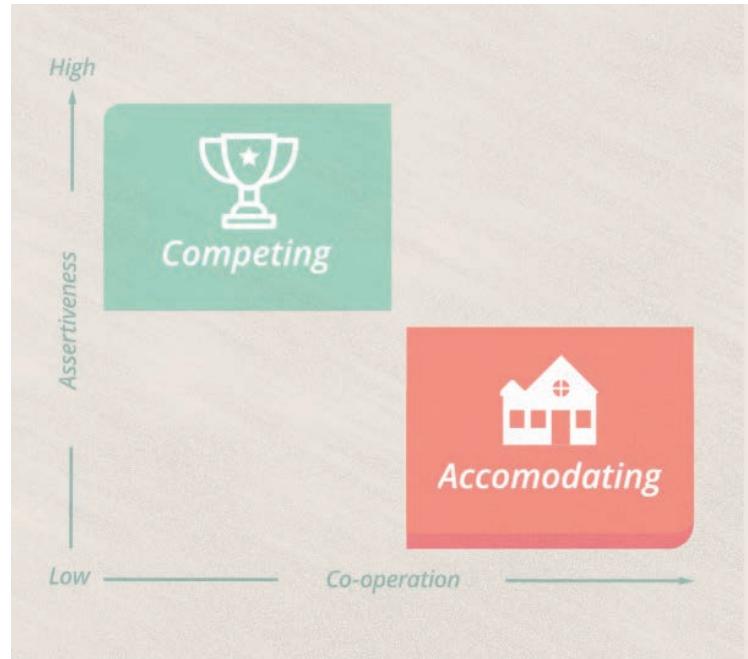
Assertiveness is the extent to which a person tries to satisfy their own concerns, while co-operation is the extent to which they attempt to satisfy someone else's concerns.



Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (cont.)

A competing style is defined by high levels of assertiveness and low levels of co-operation. Here, people treat conflict as a battle where there can be only one winner and they will do all they can to come out on top.

An accommodating style involves passively co-operating with the rest of the team to try and defuse conflict - it is the complete opposite of the competing style. People who adopt this style are generally looking for the 'quiet life' - they neglect their own concerns to satisfy those of others. While this approach can help resolve conflicts, it may not lead to high levels of team performance - as it can mean some team members don't put forward useful ideas for fear of sparking arguments.

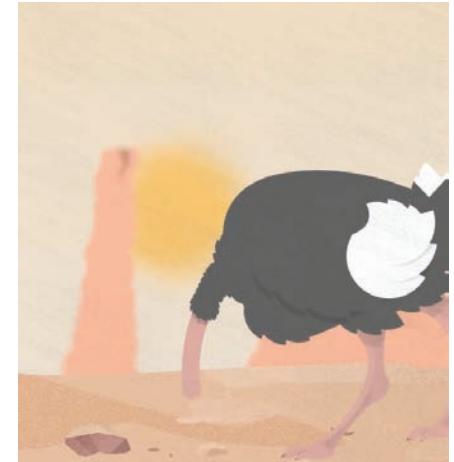
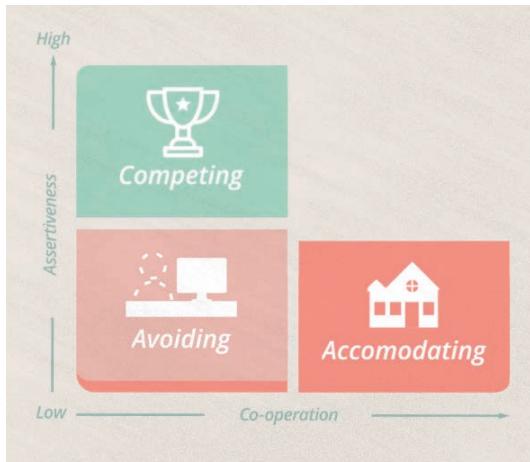




Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (cont.)

An avoiding style, which combines low levels of assertiveness and co-operation, sees people shy away from interaction with the rest of the team altogether, in the hope that conflicts will somehow resolve themselves.

Sometimes, this can be useful - diplomatically postponing an issue to be dealt with later, for example, so the team can focus on the task at hand. But it can also be ineffective - it can be the equivalent of 'burying your head in the sand'.

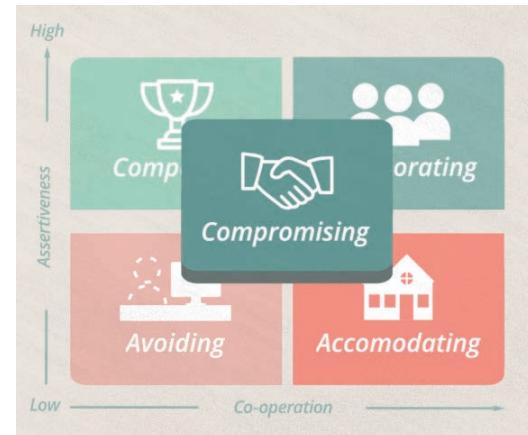
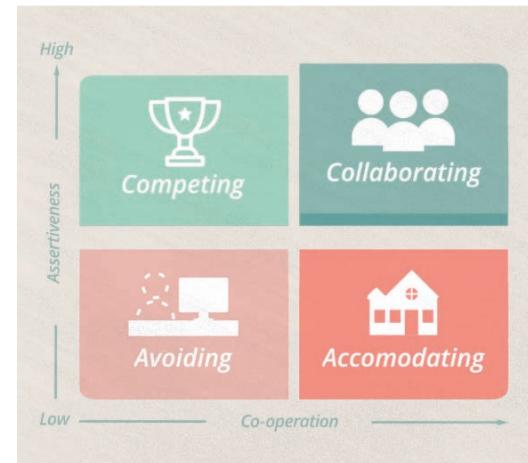


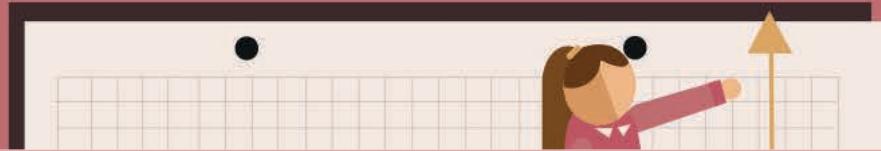


Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (cont.)

A collaborating style is defined by high levels of both co-operation and assertiveness. Here, people aren't shy to put forward their ideas for resolving a conflict and they'll work together to find a solution that fully satisfies everyone's concerns.

Finally, a compromising style involves finding common ground among the team and trying to forge a mutually acceptable solution that partially satisfies everyone. Compromising gives up more than Competing, but less than Accommodating. And it addresses the issue more directly than Avoiding, but in less depth than Collaborating.





Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument - Example

Let's look at how these styles might play out in real life.

Rose and Amir are members of a team that builds jet engines for aircrafts. A senior manager has asked their team to submit one way to increase efficiency in the production process.

Rose thinks the team should buy new equipment for the production line. Amir thinks the team would be more productive if it changed its shift pattern from two shifts a day to three.





Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument - Example (cont.)

As the team can only put forward one idea, Rose and Amir come into conflict over whose idea the team should submit - and they have very different ways of dealing with it.

Rose naturally adopts a competing style - she thinks her idea is the best and is unwilling to listen to any criticisms or alternative suggestions. But the team feels it can't put forward her idea as it stands, as it's too expensive and would not get approval.





Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument - Example (cont.)

Amir, on the other hand, adopts an accommodating style. When his colleagues suggest he could adapt his idea by also cutting night shifts and introducing extra weekend shifts, he readily agrees and includes their ideas in his revised proposal. But in trying to incorporate their suggestions, his idea becomes unworkable and the team can't put forward his suggestion either.

This leaves the team with no ideas to submit to the senior manager.



Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument - Example (cont.)

Neither Rose nor Amir's natural approaches to managing conflict served them well. Instead, both would have been better off trying to reach a compromise. Rose could have considered cheaper alternatives to her preferred equipment, for example. And Amir could have run a critical eye over the team's shift ideas rather than accepting them all wholesale.

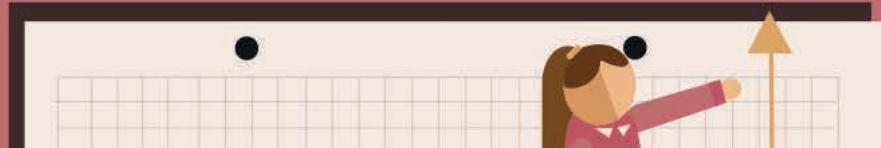
The TKI can help you reflect on your natural styles and judge whether or not they're helpful. If not, it can show you how to adjust your behaviour accordingly.



Myers-Briggs Type Indicator

Maintaining good communication is perhaps the most important aspect of managing a team - if team members are unable to share ideas, discuss strategies and work together to solve problems, the team as a whole will be unable to function.

One well-known tool that can be used to improve the effectiveness of team communication is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator - or MBTI.

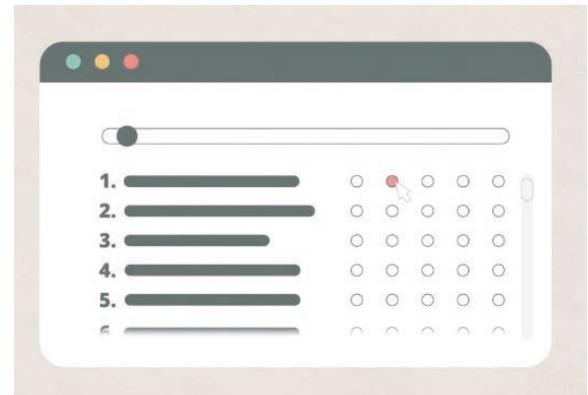


Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (cont.)

The MBTI was developed by Katharine Briggs and her daughter Isabel Briggs Myers in the 1940s, as a tool for characterising people's personalities. It uses a questionnaire to look at where people's preferences fall along each of these four dimensions:

- Extraversion-Introversion
- Intuition-Sensing
- Thinking-Feeling
- Judging-Perceiving

The results of a person's questionnaire can then be used to assign them one of 16 personality 'types'.

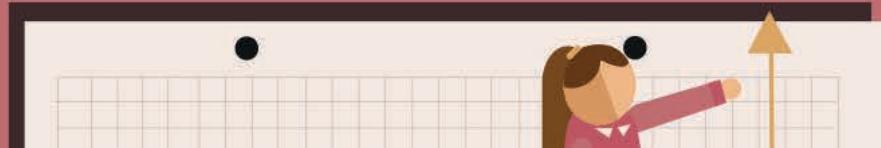




Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (cont.)

While the MBTI is most often used with individuals to help them understand their values and motivations, the same dimensions can also be used to gain insights across teams.

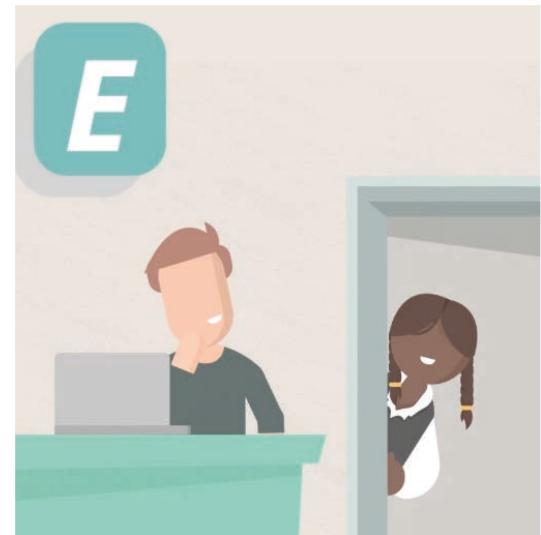
By looking at how the majority of team members like to communicate, you can judge how best to approach communication within that team - and also be aware of potential problems you might face.

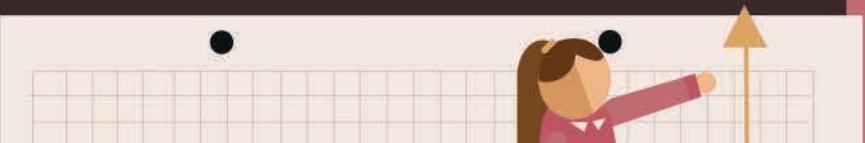


Extraversion

For example, a team where most members show a preference for Extraversion may arrive at decisions through lively discussions and ‘thinking out loud’. They may schedule frequent meetings, regularly drop by each other’s workspaces and enjoy talking face-to-face.

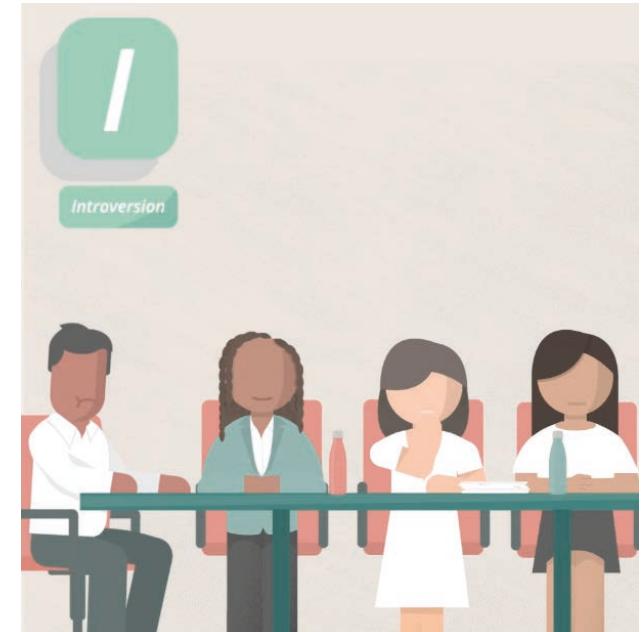
This approach can have benefits, such as high levels of collaboration and group-based problem solving. But it can also have a negative impact - if team members interrupt each other in their eagerness to share ideas, for example, or if quieter team members feel overwhelmed and unable to contribute.





Introversion

In contrast, team members who show a preference for Introversion may communicate less frequently, using email and other written communications, and they may be more reserved during team discussions. They may also prefer only to present their ideas once they've had time to think them through. This may help the team to have more focused discussions, without too many distractions - but it may also inhibit creativity and frustrate team members who naturally have lots of ideas and are keen to share them and get quick feedback.



Teams where everyone shares the same approach may be able to communicate quite freely. But where team members have different preferences, tensions may creep in and communication may break down.

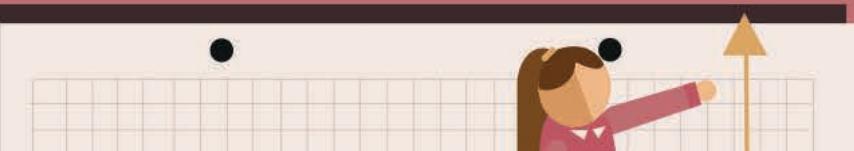


Overcoming Communication Issues

To help overcome such problems, managers should encourage team members to respect the preferences of everyone in the team, and to ask themselves questions, such as:

- Am I overwhelming my peers with too much information, or interrupting them?
- Am I giving everyone in the team a chance to speak and express their thoughts?
- Am I delaying team actions by not being confident enough to present my own ideas and opinions to the rest of the group?

Encouraging team members to reflect on their preferences in this way, and to be open to adapting their behaviour, can help ensure more open and constructive communication within the team.



Communicating Remotely

Deciding how to approach communication is even more important when you're managing remote teams, whose members may be widely dispersed - working in different cities, countries, or even time zones.

In these situations, communication may be fragmented and some members may feel isolated from the rest of the team - and this may impact on their ability to 'gel'. Using the language of Tuckman's model from lesson 1, the team may get stuck at the 'forming' stage.



As a team manager, your role here is to ensure your team members can overcome any physical distances between them to build a solid working relationship.



Communicating Remotely (cont.)

To begin with, it's crucial that you take time to establish how you are going to communicate with the team.

For example, are you going to have regular videocalls to stay in contact? Or are you happy to send out an email once a week? How you communicate with your team, and how often, will depend on many factors, including the task they are working on and you and your team members' own preferences.



Communicating Remotely (cont.)

Whichever approach you take, it's also good practice to set out some communication guidelines, so that people know what's expected of them.

This includes setting parameters about when people are expected to be available to answer calls or respond to emails. You might want to make it clear, for example, that you will not be checking your text messages after 6pm, and team members will have to wait until the following morning for your reply.



Inclusivity and Fairness

We'll now discuss two important concepts that are sometimes overlooked when discussing the practical side of effective team management. These are inclusivity and fairness.

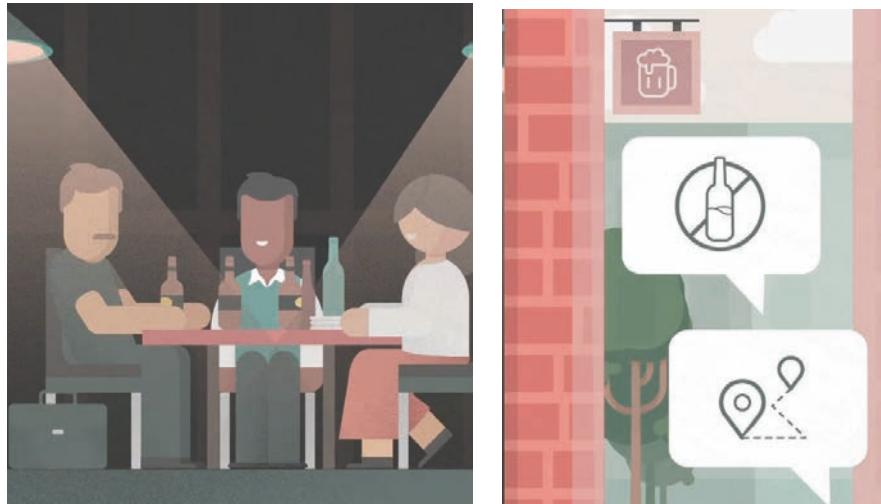
If you want people to work well together, you need to create an atmosphere of inclusion: where every team member feels valued, supported and respected.

While it's easy to make the right noises about being an 'inclusive' or 'diverse' employer, in reality it needs careful management. It's rare that every one of your team members will fit your company or team culture perfectly and it's important not to lose sight of the individuals who make up the team and how to manage them.

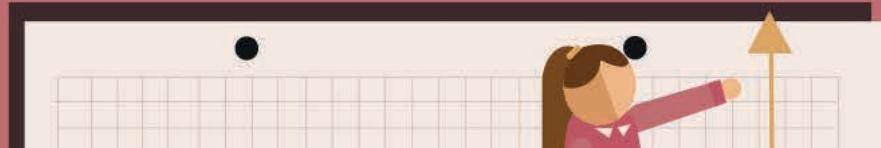


Inclusivity and Fairness (cont.)

For example, in the UK, many organisations hold regular after-work drinks as a way for employees to bond. These are also opportunities to establish new networks; there may be time to speak with senior managers, lay out plans, and find mentors. But such events aren't always inclusive - they may exclude people who don't drink alcohol, for example, or those who live far from work and can't stay late.



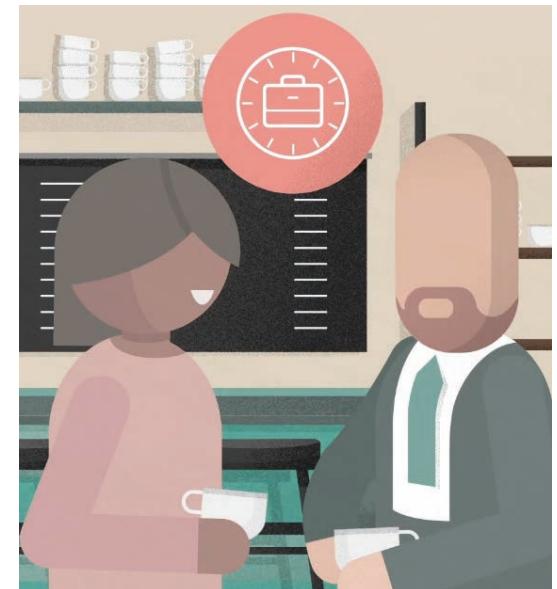
Not every manager has the power to move the time or place where company socialising occurs. But knowing that some people are likely to feel left out can prompt you to develop alternative ways to engage with them.



Inclusivity and Fairness (cont.)

If you are able to organise events for your team, you can make them more inclusive by changing the venue to a neutral place, like a cafe. Or you might arrange events during working hours, by giving the team an afternoon off.

Most importantly, you should be open to feedback on the team's culture. It's sometimes difficult for us to understand the impact our behaviours or attitudes can have on others. Inviting feedback is another way to stay 'open' and 'approachable.' If you've made it clear that it's safe for employees to offer their opinions, you may be surprised at what you learn.

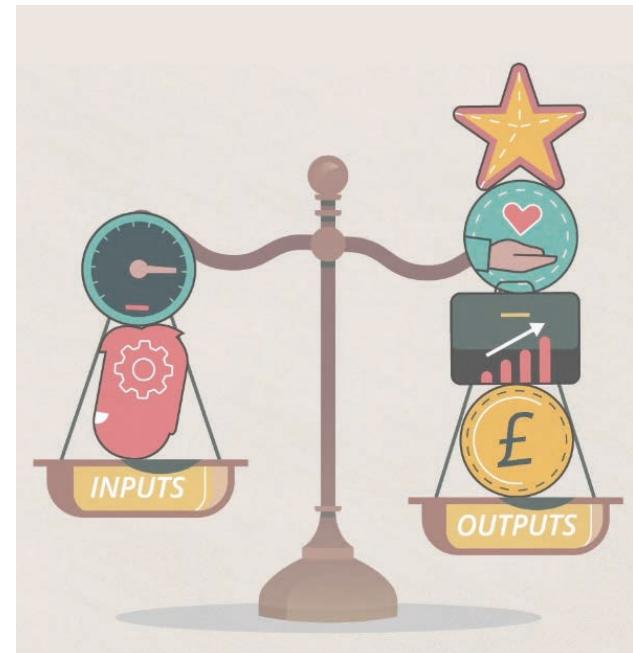


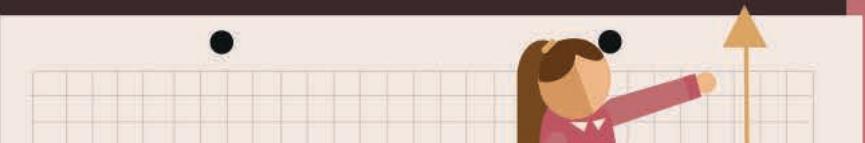


Equity Theory

Team members tend to be very alert when it comes to issues of fairness and parity - and they'll be quick to point out if they feel they're being treated unfairly compared to their colleagues.

The impact that perceptions of unfairness can have on employees was studied in the 1960s by psychologist John Stacey Adams in his work on Equity Theory. This considers the balance between an employee's inputs - such as the skills they have and the effort they put into their work - and their outputs - that is, the rewards they receive. This includes salary and bonus payments, as well as more intangible rewards such as promotions, responsibility and status.

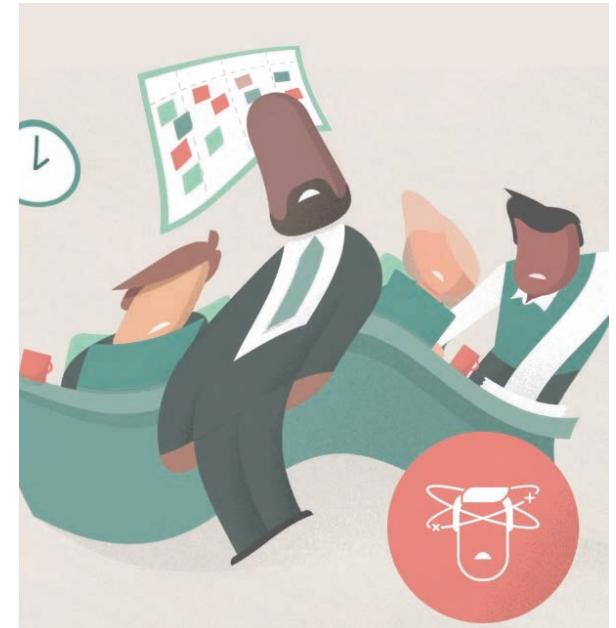




Equity Theory (cont.)

Equity Theory proposes that workers compare their own balance of inputs and outputs with those of their colleagues - and if they feel they're being 'short-changed', they will become demotivated and may take action to redress the balance.

In a team setting, this can lead to conflict, not only between a team member and their manager, but also between colleagues - which can lead to the whole team spiralling into dysfunction.

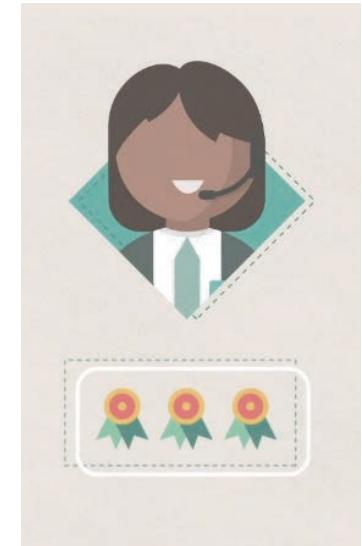




Equity Theory - Example

Let's look at how Equity Theory might be applied in practice.

Nadeem is a member of the customer support team at a utilities company. He works in a team of six and his job involves taking calls and answering queries from customers. Nadeem is the longest-serving member of the team - so when his manager announces his plan to retire, Nadeem feels he has a good chance at being promoted to team leader. He waits a few weeks, expecting to be invited to a selection interview - only for his manager to announce unexpectedly that Sheila, another member of the team, will be taking over when he leaves.

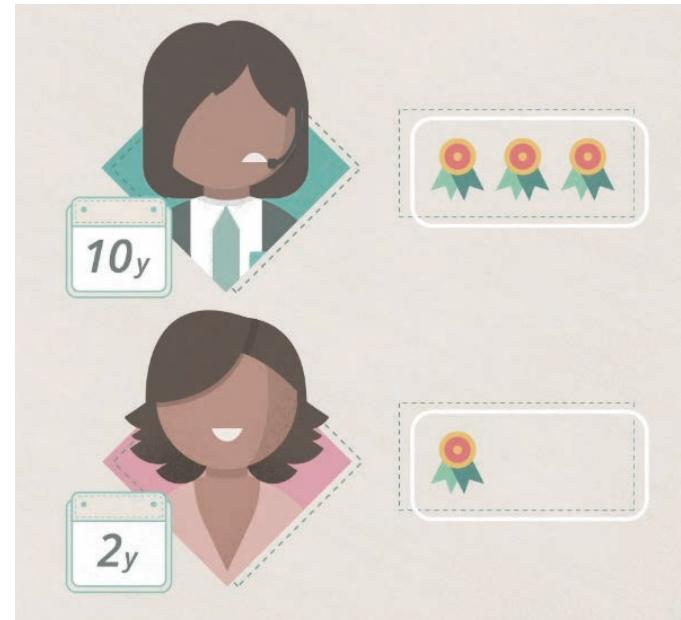


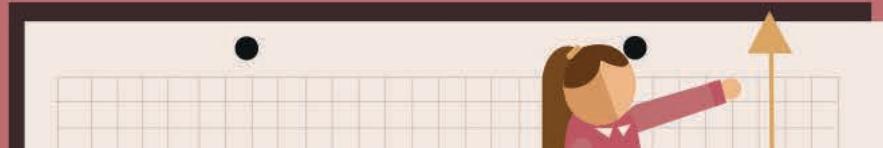


Equity Theory - Example (cont.)

Nadeem is extremely angry at this. He has been at the company for ten years, compared to Sheila's two, and believes he has far better knowledge and skills than her.

He thinks the decision is unfair and as a result he loses motivation and starts coming into work late. The quality of his calls drops, which brings down the average customer service rating for the whole team.

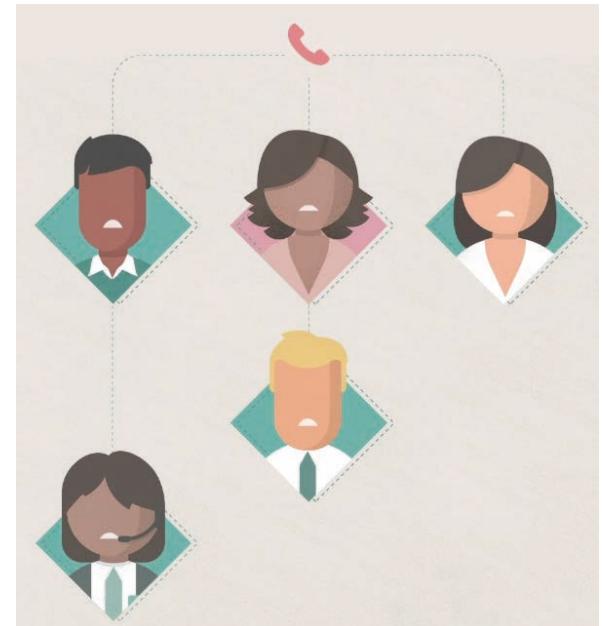


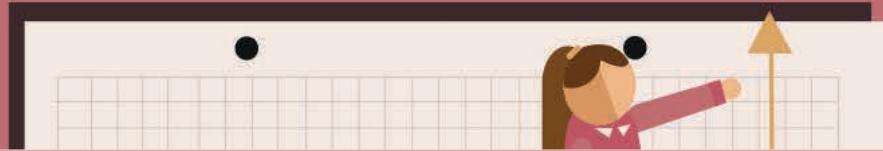


Equity Theory - Example (cont.)

Even though Nadeem's personal situation hasn't changed - he's still working the same hours and receiving the same pay and bonuses as before - because he feels he has been treated unfairly compared to Sheila, he has become unhappy and demotivated.

As a team manager, you need to be aware of how your treatment of one team member might impact the rest of the team.





Recap

In this lesson, you have learned about:

- The challenges involved in managing teams
- The importance of maintaining good communication when working with teams
- The importance of inclusivity and fairness to ensure effective team performance