



Promote effective interaction among team members with different profiles

What makes a team valuable is the diversity of its members, provided of course, that the latter are able to reconcile their differences constructively. But what exactly is meant by “diversity?” Different skills, varied experiences, and diverse cultures which give people different perspectives? Certainly. Yet, the work of scientists like Meredith Belbin shows that **team performance depends primarily on the ability of the constituent members to play complementary roles.**

The value of diversity must be extracted to become an asset.

This may seem obvious. However, simply allocating tasks to different individuals is not enough. Here, complementary roles refer to different types of added value, such as the ability to motivate people, stimulate their creativity, ensure that decisions are realistic, etc. Success depends more on the personality of those assigned to play various roles than on the decision to allocate responsibilities in the first place.

The challenge is consequently to build teams that include members who can and want to play different roles, but who can also interact constructively with one another – no easy task. Indeed, diverse personality types often have trouble working together, given that they spontaneously think and work in dissimilar ways.

A different approach to problems

When faced with an obstacle, some people like to start by thinking of a solution and then test it out, while others cannot make a move before they have analyzed the problem in minute detail. Certain personality types prefer to be alone to think, while others spontaneously begin by collecting a wide range of inputs from all sides, etc. So, **how can you foster effective collaboration among individuals who think and work so differently?**

Divergent communication styles

Some people tackle conflicting opinions head-on, and do not hesitate to raise potential areas of disagreement, while others prefer to avoid friction and focus on finding consensus. Talkative individuals enjoy discussing their plans at length, as well as their ups and downs

along the way. But this attitude may be irksome for their more reserved counterparts, who prefer to keep conversations on a more factual basis. **How can you avoid the misunderstandings and animosity that can arise as a result of these differences in style?**

Different individual paces

Is there a time for thinking and a time for action? Indeed, some people work best sequentially, and the time required for thinking may vary widely from person to person. Conversely, some need to take action in order to clarify their thinking. Similarly, some people prefer to decide rapidly, even if this may mean taking risks, while others prefer to consolidate what has been accomplished before taking the next step. **Considering these differences in pace, how can you keep a team in sync?**

These differences are not grounds for giving up on creating teams with varied profiles. Indeed, such collaboration is a prerequisite for building a high-performance team. However, every member of the team must understand the added value of the other members and be able to interact constructively with them. It is a good idea to provide some keys to help each participant decipher how their counterparts think and function.

An ideal team should contain five profiles:

Note: The same individual may play several roles

- 1 A **pilot** to drive the team
- 2 An **innovator** to stimulate creativity
- 3 An **expert** focused on a specific domain
- 4 A **facilitator** to foster discussion
- 5 An **organizer** to facilitate action

1st team member profile

A **pilot** to drive the team

How to work with them

- **Listen to the pilot's ideas** and take the time to discuss them: The pilot needs to be aligned with the overall vision to make effective progress.
- **Channel the energy of an impatient pilot** on a specific facet of the project, e.g., conducting a test, running a helpful subsidiary project, etc.
- **Use the pilot's energy** to drum up excitement when the going gets tough.
- **Dare to discuss different perspectives:** a seemingly opinionated pilot is probably reflecting enthusiasm more than closed-mindedness.

A pilot helps the team **visualize where it is headed**. This role may be played by the official team leader, but may also be played by other members of the team. A pilot is likely to make remarks such as “*We should clarify our goals,*” or “*Hey, why are we doing this? Where are we going with this?*”

It is essential to have at least one pilot on a team, because this is the person who **generates the most energy**. Indeed, motivated by the vision of what the team wants to achieve, the pilot's enthusiasm is contagious. He or she is also good at refocusing efforts when things drift off course or turn in circles, and is ready to tackle sensitive subjects and

make tradeoffs when necessary.

The other members of the team may have trouble keeping up with the pilot. Indeed, the pilot's single-minded focus on a personal vision of the project may give people the impression that he or

The pilot
breathes energy
into the team

she does not look before leaping. The pilot, on the other hand, may easily become impatient if a project appears

to be dragging or drifting. When this happens, the pilot's natural style of often being direct may cause him to clash with the other participants. Effective pilots must consequently learn to **channel their energy** and take the different pace of the other team members into consideration.

Typical questions asked by different profiles

PILOT	INNOVATOR	EXPERT	FACILITATOR	ORGANIZER
<i>What is our objective?</i>	<i>What if we tried...?</i>	<i>Did you check whether...?</i>	<i>And you, what do you think about this?</i>	<i>How will we go about this?</i>

2nd team member profile

An **innovator** to stimulate creativity

How to work with them

- **Use the innovator's original perspective** to get the group thinking and stimulate new ideas, particularly when the situation is complex or has hit a roadblock.
- **Help the innovator explain his or her reasoning to others;** if he or she is jumping too quickly from one idea to the next, say so.
- **Establish clear direction** if the innovator's propensity to explore different alternatives seems to be wasting the team's time.
- **If the innovator's ideas are rejected,** explain why and stress that you still value his or her contribution. This is essential to encourage the innovator to continue participating in the future.

Innovators are always happy to suggest new and creative ideas and solutions. Often, they may jump quickly from one idea to another, and enjoy moving off the beaten track. Innovators are generally the ones who encourage the team to tackle subjects from a different angle or to explore incongruous ideas.

On a team, innovators will be **the most comfortable dealing with completely new**

Innovators encourage
the team to explore
new options.

or complex situations. The innovator's original viewpoint forces fellow team members to take a step back and challenge their views, thus forcing them to venture outside their comfort zone and seek improvement opportunities.

Innovators generally enjoy marching to their own drummer, and may not

necessarily follow the methodology adopted by the rest of the team. Teamwork is thus not particularly natural for them. They may easily change their minds, and become irritated by their more methodical coworkers. Reciprocally, innovators may appear a bit unstable or “flaky” to more conserva-

tive team members. To allow the team to capitalize fully on their potential value, **innovators must be**

coached to work better with others – to give them time to catch up and to take practical constraints into consideration. Because creative types are often tempted to give up if they are put under too much pressure to conform, the “free thinking” of innovators must also be protected.

3rd team member profile

An **expert** focused on a specific domain

Experts are positioned primarily as specialists in their domain. Often deeply committed and perseverant when it comes to their specific area of expertise, they may have difficulty focusing on other matters. Experts can be recognized from telltale statements such as, *"I know this very well; this is right up my alley,"* or *"I will take a closer look at this."*

Most teams need experts, particularly with regard to issues critical to their success. Indeed, **experts generally latch onto a problem and don't let go until they find the answer.** Their perfectionism and precision makes them a valuable safe-

guard. Therefore, their passionate focus and willingness to engage help the rest of the team progress.

However, experts may have trouble integrating into the team. Because they want to ensure that they do a perfect job in their area of responsibility, they

Experts bring detailed knowledge and experience

may sometimes dig in their heels and give the impression that they don't care about others' constraints. Their excessive attention to detail may also slow down the team and irritate their counterparts. For the team to benefit fully from their expertise, one must often coach experts on **how to be accepted by the other members.**

How to work with them

- Help the expert play a recognized role on the team, by acknowledging his or her sense of detail and analytical skills.
- Encourage the expert to express ideas and opinions outside the scope of his or her expertise. Stress that no one expects him or her to know everything about the subject, and that his or her perspectives are still valued.
- Help the expert become aware that most subjects can be seen from different angles and that other viewpoints are also legitimate.
- Encourage the expert to take a step back to avoid getting lost in the details, and to be sensitive to time constraints.

4th team member profile

A **facilitator** to foster discussion

Facilitators spontaneously lend an attentive ear to team members and willingly lend a helping hand as well, thus ensuring that the group functions smoothly. They enjoy promoting team spirit, specifically by facilitating communication among the members. In particular, facilitators pull reluctant participants into the conversation with questions such as: *"And you, what do you think?"*

Serving as the glue that binds the team together, facilitators often contribute in intangible, but nonetheless invaluable ways. Thanks to their well-developed diplomatic and social skills, they can get along with a wide variety of personality types and minimize interpersonal conflict. They consequently

play an important role in fostering the emergence of a constructive climate.

Their consensual approach may nonetheless make facilitators appear indecisive. Because they care deeply what other people think, they may hesitate to promote their own ideas, thus

Facilitators keep the team running smoothly.

depriving the team of a potentially valuable contribution. In addition, their constant search for consensus

may sometimes be incompatible with time constraints, and thus difficult for other team members to understand. Facilitators are particularly valuable when they learn to **moderate their fear of conflict** and to take advantage of their mediation skills while assertively expressing their own views.

How to work with them

- Use the facilitator to understand the viewpoints of the other team members or to rekindle discussions in the event of conflict.
- Recognize the contribution of the facilitator in keeping the team operating smoothly.
- Have the team share enjoyable moments to establish a positive environment more comfortable for facilitators.
- Encourage facilitators to express their own views, and help them accept the possibility of conflict.

Key words used by different profile types

PILOT	INNOVATOR	EXPERT	FACILITATOR	ORGANIZER
Vision Energy Goal Action	Ideas Otherwise Advances New	Exactitude Perseverance Specialization Details	Listening Dialogue Tolerance Mediation	Pragmatism Method Execution Concrete

5th team member profile

An **organizer** to facilitate execution

How to work with them

- Encourage the organizer to express his or her doubts and concerns before making decisions. Indeed, his or her pragmatic perspective may be very helpful despite a natural reticence to speak up during abstract thinking phases.
- Accept the need of the organizer to structure his or her operating framework. Even if it may seem superfluous to you, it will greatly facilitate his or her progress.
- Recognize the discomfort of the organizer with unfamiliar or variable situations. Facilitate things for him or her by offering to structure the approach, for example.
- Use the organizer's reliability and sense of priorities to ensure the project gets executed properly.

Organizers drive the transition from principles to action. They enjoy translating the team's ideas into concrete initiatives and alerting their fellow team members to problems that could occur during implementation. They are the ones who suggest establishing detailed schedules and checklists, or who think about the practical aspects, saying things like, "So, concretely, how will we go about this?"

During the preparatory phases, the pragmatic vision of organizers helps them sensitize the team to the feasibility of the project and to prepare for deployment. But **organizers realize their**

full potential during the execution phase, as they focus on orchestrating the progression of the work and thus play a critical role in success.

Organizers may appear to be conservative to their fellow-members, because

they are often uncomfortable discussing ideas while they are still abstract. Indeed, they need projects to be

structured to move forward effectively and may be destabilized by unfamiliar situations. To benefit fully from what organizers have to offer, **teams must reassure them during the initial phases of a project**, and rely on their pragmatic approach thereafter.

Organizers
prepare the team
for execution.

Five complementary profiles

	Added value	Risk factors
PILOT	• Contagious energy • Results oriented • Aptitude for making decisions and facing problems	• May be impatient • Often direct, may clash with fellow-members • Convinced of the validity of own vision, may appear unwilling to listen to other perspectives
INNOVATOR	• Contributes original ideas • Comfortable with innovation • Able to change perspectives when the team reaches a dead end or is turning in circles	• Sometimes more concerned with ideas than their implementation • May have trouble adapting to the pace of others • May sometimes have difficulty explaining ideas
EXPERT	• Concerned with perfection and precision • Perseverant in delving deeper into subjects within the domain of expertise • Often impassioned	• Not particularly inclined to take account of others' constraints • Less interested in subjects outside his or her domain of expertise • Anxious to delve into details, may slow down the rest of the team
FACILITATOR	• Possesses good listening skills • Able to adapt to various personality types • Possesses a sense of diplomacy helpful in defusing conflicts	• May have trouble making decisions in the absence of consensus • Tends to put others' opinions and ideas before his or her own • May waste time seeking impossible agreements in vain
ORGANIZER	• Brings in pragmatism invaluable at the execution stage • Has his or her feet firmly on the ground, protecting the team from dangerous flights of fancy • Has a good aptitude for orchestrating activities	• May be destabilized by new situations • May have trouble moving forward in relatively unstructured environments • Often has difficulty thinking when things are not yet concrete