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GETTING THE MOST FROM YOUR TEAM – VALUING THE INTROVERT(S) IN YOUR ORGANIZATION Article by Patrick Costello

Nearly every team we work with consists of tremendously talented, knowledgeable and capable people – stars. Yet, many of these teams do not perform at a star level.

How is it that you can put a group of your stars together on a team in the hope they'll accomplish great things – and end up with mediocre results?

In my experience working with teams utilizing the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), I have recognized one significant reason for this phenomenon – the inability of groups to turn their ***differences*** into ***strengths***. In many instances, the differences that exist in teams become obstacles and barriers to greater performance – rather than the multiplier that we usually hope for from teams.

One of the more difficult differences teams struggle with is the Extraversion/Introversion dimension as measured by the MBTI.

Teams are only as good as their *combined brainpower*. Accessing the best thinking and contributions of every team member is how teams add value and begin to make the equation equal something greater.

Allowing differences of Extraversion/Introversion to be a *barrier* results in a negative in the team equation. In other words, 1 + 1 does not equal three. In fact, it doesn't even equal two.

It has been said, "The United States has a love affair with extraversion." Data suggests introverts are outnumbered three to one in the U.S. population. As a result, for many companies, extraversion is seen as the way things work, and introversion is viewed as "a challenge."

Consider: Who is more highly valued and rewarded – a person who is outwardly focused, fast-paced and always doing... or a person who prefers quiet and privacy for concentrating and who might ask "one more question" before starting a project? It's clear, isn't it? The extravert is perceived as productive, while someone who works more deliberately and reflectively is questioned. We wouldn't get anything done without the extraverts, right?

Of course in business it's the results that count. As a result, more extraverted leaders can get rather anxious about an introvert's inclination to reflect before doing. It can be



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interpreted as a lack of urgency or commitment to results. Perhaps this is why, in the MBTI team building workshops I lead, I often hear a bias toward extraversion as being more effective, more desirable in business settings. In my experience (speaking as an introvert) these beliefs get in the way of better team and organizational effectiveness because it discounts the value introverts can offer. The irony is... it is precisely in our **difference** from the prevailing preferences that we have value to offer.

One of the biggest challenges we see teams facing is getting contribution from all team members in group settings where strategy is created, alignment is achieved and plans are made. Frequently, the difficulty we see is a rush to action, before issues have had sufficient reflection – what is often referred to as, “Ready, Fire, Aim!”

The introverted voices on a team can help avoid this pitfall. In my experience, this is when teams become more than a collection of individuals. To help you get more from your team, here are FIVE ways to engage the introverts on your team:

1. Remember - asking an introvert to behave more like an extravert is like asking a cat to think it's a dog. It isn't going to happen!
2. Identify the strengths of the introverts on your team. Create a plan to more fully utilize these strengths.
3. Adapt your team process to regularly invite participation from all team members.
4. Build reflective time, writing exercises, and one-to-one discussion into your team meetings.
5. Provide the topics and focus questions in advance of your meetings so there is time to reflect on them in advance.

Remember, introverts:

- Require little supervision.
- Are able to present views clearly in writing.
- Ability to think "out of the box".
- The ability to concentrate energy on complex problems.
- Will take your team dialogue to a deeper level.
- Will make sure the team “aims” before it “fires”.

Good luck turning your group of stars into a star team!

To learn more:

- { HYPERLINK "<http://www.introvertsadvantage.com>" }
- { HYPERLINK "<http://www.capt.org>" }
- { HYPERLINK "<http://www.cpp-db.com>" }