



UNDERSTANDING TEAM WORK STYLES

Goal: Create a more communicative and efficient team by helping individuals understand their personal work style, as well as the strengths, needs, and challenges of the people with whom they work.

FACILITATOR PRE-THINKING

Develop the Work Styles

What are three to four work styles that represent your team? Consider groups of people rather than individuals. Write a brief paragraph description of each for participants to use as a starting place for the workshop activity. Here are some questions to help you formulate them:

- What do you most often notice them doing?
- What trends and patterns do they exhibit?
- What are their habits when working alone and in a team? What mode do they seem most comfortable in?
- How do they tend to tackle a problem?

If you need an example, check out the project manager styles from the [“Cultivating Effective Team Dynamics”](#) Jute blog post. Or, consider adapting and/or combining these common archetypes:



Communicator
Social and collaborative



Visionary
Thinks long term and dreams big



Planner
Makes task lists and is detail oriented



Producer
Process oriented and thrives on clear direction



Risk-taker
Jumps in and figures it out as it comes

Develop Your Rationale

Put some thought into why your team is participating in this activity. Include the thinking of individuals on the team who may have requested such work. Some examples for rationale might include working on empathy, engaging in personal and group reflection, or maximizing efficiency. Maybe it’s something else, or all of the above! Whatever the reason, have the rationale prepared ahead of time to introduce the activity. People are more likely to buy-in if they understand the purpose behind why they are doing something (especially something vulnerable and out of people’s comfort zone).

Think Through Activity Space

Consider where to host the activity. Office spaces maintain a professional air, but a home or retreat can sometimes offer a more relaxed setting and help participants be open and honest. Ensure that there is enough common space or breakout rooms for the groups to split off and brainstorm.

Think Through Activity Time

Keeping a time limit for breakout groups and other steps of the activity makes people feel that their time is valued and helps them time manage. Decide in advance how much flexibility you’ll allow. If a question or issue is raised during the small group presentations that is worth everyone’s attention, will you spend extra time discussing? Sometimes activities don’t go as planned, but everyone should leave the activity feeling like it was worth their while. Think about the individuals on your team and envision them going through each step of the process. You might plan for possible detours along the way based on this pre-thinking. If the plan does go off track, remember to bring the group back to the agenda and make adjustments as needed.

ACTIVITY



55–60
minutes



Materials Needed

Copies of the 3-4 'work styles' that you've come up with
Poster paper for group brainstorming
Pens & Markers
Post-it notes & Note cards (for reflection activity)

Briefly and sensitively share your pre-thinking rationale with your team



Tip: Any transparency you feel you can offer your team is great. Keep things positive and honest to allow the group to fully buy into the work. You might also consider bringing someone from the outside the team or business to maintain neutrality.

Participants read the management styles and identify one that they are *most* like



Tip: Some people don't love being pigeonholed into one style. Encourage them to pick a style for the purpose of this activity. Acknowledge any fears of being "typecast" and make it about a style rather than about the individual. This acknowledgement also helps create trust and safety among group members when it comes to speaking frankly about what's challenging for in a work environment with different approaches to life and work. It helps those concerns rise to the surface without people feeling personally attacked.

Participants break out into groups with their common style and make a digital or physical poster that identifies the following:



What are the strengths of this style?

What are the challenges of this style?

What need does this style have to be happy?

What styles does this style work well with? And which styles does this style struggle with and why?

Note: The different style groups may want to present information differently. This is part of their identity, so allowing some time for them to figure out how they want to present and share this information is part of the activity.

When everyone is ready, each group (style) presents the information from their digital or physical poster. While each group is sharing, individuals from the other styles use two Post-it notes labeled with the presenting style to reflect on the following things:



What is one thing I can go to this style for when I have a challenge?

What is one thing I can do to support this style?

Tip: This step is crucial for personal reflection and building communication and connection between members of your team. Simply hearing someone talk doesn't always internalize learning, but writing down how a styles' presentation relates to you helps internalize the learning and matter.

After all groups present, everyone leaves their Post-it notes on the "poster" that matches the style.



Observations:

Participants do a *silent* gallery walk of the posters, walking around and noting what other people wrote on their Post-it notes. If something resonates, participants can add ideas or stick stars to the Post-it notes.



Thoughts:

Tip: This step shows the community buy-in effort to acknowledge and respect differences in the workspace. It allows for people to silently read and think about other team members' reactions to the activity and what everyone learned. Allowing time for silence and slowing down for reflection helps internal processors and gives space for people to return to a balanced place if something from the presentations hit a personal chord.

Individual Reflection



Write a 2-3 sentence reflection on the note cards answering the prompt:

Based on what you learned about yourself and your team today, who are you on your best day at work?

Tip: Leadership team or project managers can save these for personal reflection in future meetings, or perhaps they can be used as part of an employee profile on the website.