



Lawyer Services Department

The Update

Risk Management for you and your Practice

Fall 2008

Improved Teamwork Yields Better Results

Linda Hazelton

Team or group work is here to stay. We work frequently in teams in our law firms – attorney/staff teams, practice groups, special project teams, client teams, function or department teams, and other teams or work groups. Some teams produce better results than others. Some teams seem to function more smoothly. Why? The answer may be found in the “type” of team.

Diverse teams, comprising people with different innate mental habits and approaches, may find that they clash more frequently. Their processes may differ, and they may be uncomfortable with work styles in contrast to their own. Teams with similar thought patterns – birds of a feather flocking together, so to speak – may be happier working together. They may find that there is little friction because they share, unconsciously or otherwise, common traits or styles.

In reviewing the literature on type and team performance, Allen Hammer and Greg Huszco in *MBTI® Applications: A Decade of Research on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator®* (pages 97-98) concluded that:

“Similarity is positively



related to process variables and negatively related to outcome variables. Teams comprised of types with similar communication styles seem to perform tasks quicker, have less conflict, demonstrate greater liking of other team members, and listen to one another more than do teams consisting of types whose communication style is different.

On the other hand, teams with more diverse communication styles seem to be more effective and to produce outcomes of better quality. This discrepancy seems to be more pronounced when the teams are working on ambiguous versus structured tasks. There was also some evidence that type-similar

groups had more variable results on the outcome variables than did the type-diverse groups.”

(Source: Hile Rutledge of Otto Krueger Associates, *Building Teams with Type, CAPT®* course.)

As we look at teams and how to improve their levels of performance, recall that teams take on the “type” of their members. Here, type stands for personality type as measured by the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI®), a psychometric instrument developed by Katharine Briggs and her daughter, Isabel Myers, based on the work of

Carl Jung. Jung held that we all possessed and used innate mental habits. There are, according to MBTI®, 16 types, measured on four different scales. The four scales of preference are E/I, Extraversion and Introversion (where we get our batteries recharged); S/N, Sensing and Intuition (what kind of information we tend to gather); T/F, Thinking and Feeling (how we form judgments and make decisions); and J/P, Judging and Perceiving (how we like to organize or orient our world).

To know the type of a team, we must first know the types of the individuals on the team. Individuals taking the MBTI® will “score” as “ENTPs” or “ISFJs,” for example. The letters in combination are the “whole,” which is greater than the sum of its parts. Even if you have not been exposed to the MBTI®, you may be able to make some inferences based on observable behaviors and using the accompanying table.

<p>E Extraversion Extraverts may</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk more • Process thoughts out loud • Appear more sociable • Recharge their batteries by being with others • Be interested in many things • Prefer to brainstorm or work in teams 	<p>Introversion I Introverts may</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk less • Think before speaking (pausing to gather their thoughts) • Appear less gregarious • Recharge their batteries by spending time alone • Be deeply interested in fewer things • Prefer to work on problems alone
<p>S Sensing Sensing types may prefer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The details • Concrete data • “Now” orientation • Down-to-earth approach • Straight talk • Facts, figures 	<p>Intuition N Intuiting types may prefer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The big picture • Meanings, possibilities • Hunches, gut feel • Future orientation • Speculative or fanciful approach • Stories, analogies
<p>T Thinking Thinking types may prefer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rule of law or rule-based approach • Analytical approach • Reasons • Critiquing the ideas of others • What’s right 	<p>Feeling F Feeling types prefer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subjective or circumstance-based approach • Personal approach • Values • Supporting the ideas of others • What’s harmonious
<p>J Judging Judging types may</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be organized externally • Prefer following an established process • Prefer a schedule • Prefer finishing projects • Be perceived as more firm 	<p>Perceiving P Perceiving types may</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be organized internally • Plunge in without a process; adapt while doing • Prefer a flexible day without a preset schedule • Prefer starting projects • Be perceived as more flexible

A TEAM AT WORK: A HYPOTHETICAL EXAMPLE

Suppose that a team is formed to plan an upcoming firm retreat. The team consists of the firm’s administrator, the managing partner, the marketing partner, the heads of two practice groups, the firm’s lead marketer, and a marketing assistant. Let’s look at the type table for members of this particular team: (*see chart p.5*)

The above team is predominantly an ENTP type team, and it is certainly a P team rather than a J team. What strengths might emerge from this team? What pitfalls might it encounter? With so many Ns on the team, it will likely produce several ideas for the retreat. It may set ambitious goals for the retreat – a superb location, top-notch speakers, great results, and at least one fantastic “party.”

With so many Ps on the team, however, plans may change frequently. In fact, real plans may not be made in earnest until the time draws alarmingly near. The Js on the team, particularly since the marketing assistant may have a lesser voice and may feel uncomfortable with the lack of process the Ps seem to exhibit. They may have trouble getting the Ps to focus their attention.

Meanwhile, the Ps may be annoyed by the Js as the Js press for specific information and details and ask clarifying question after clarifying question. The Is may stop listening to the Es because the Es seem to talk so much and change their opinion so often. In fact, the Es probably aren’t changing their opinions, but instead they are simply thinking out loud. They may not know what they actually think until they’ve expressed all of their thoughts.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Knowing that “type” exists (and that it accounts for many differences) is a large part of the battle. Having a shared vocabulary helps, as does discussing type differences up front. Attributing different behaviors and styles to type is more useful than personalizing observations of divergent habits. In the previous example, the administrator (ISTJ) might say to the managing partner (ENTP), “If you are talking through this to crystallize your thinking ... I’ll be happy to be a sounding board.” The INTP practice group leader might say to the group, “I’m not withdrawn from this process. I’m committed to helping make this a great retreat. I just need time to think this through on my own before I brainstorm with you.”

Setting some ground rules for meetings helps, as does agreeing on roles and responsibilities. Also helpful is a process for making certain that styles or strengths aren’t being over or under-used.

Continued on page 5

Welcome to David Powell, Voice on the Ethics Line

Peggy Harkrader

Tell us a little about you.

I have a B.A. from the University of Chicago and a J.D. from Washington University, St. Louis. I have been a lawyer for 14 years mostly in private practice. I started working for the Washington State Bar Association as a temp in 2004.

So you are a familiar face around the bar?

Yes, I worked as a temporary Disciplinary Counseling with ODC in 2004/2005. In September 2007, I began sharing duties with Professional Responsibility Counsel Chris Sutton. In February 2008 Mr. Sutton retired and I began acting as Professional Responsibility Counsel on an interim basis.

When did you become a full time staff member?

I became a regular full time staff member on June 9, 2008.

What interested you in the PRC position here at WSBA?

When I started on an interim basis Chris Sutton told me that "... you would either enjoy the job or hate it."

So far I am enjoying the job because I have a feeling of accomplishment at the end of each day.

You have recently just completed your first LOMAP/Ethics Roadshow. How was it?

I visited Colville, Pullman and Friday Harbor, three areas that I have not been. The appreciation of the members made the trip worthwhile.



Were there any interesting stories from your first Roadshow?

After the completion of the Roadshow we stopped at the Washington State University creamery for ice cream. They were celebrating their 60 year anniversary.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

In what little spare time I have, I enjoy the task of raising a nearly 2 year old boy.

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Save the Date
April 17 — 19, 2009
LAP/LaSD Statewide Conference
Campbell's Resort, Lake Chelan



Tentative Schedule

Day	Time	Description
Friday, April 17, 2009	6pm—8pm	Dinner—Speaker
Friday, April 17, 2009	8pm—10pm	AA Meeting
Saturday, April 18, 2009	7:30am—8:30am	Breakfast/CLE Presentation
Saturday, April 18, 2009	8:30am—12pm	CLE Presentations
Saturday, April 18, 2009	12pm—1pm	Lunch/CLE Presentation
Saturday, April 18, 2009	1pm—4pm	CLE Presentations
Sunday, April 19, 2008	8am—9:30am	Breakfast/CLE Presentation
Sunday, April 19, 2008	9:30am—12pm	CLE Presentations



Saturday Dinner on your own

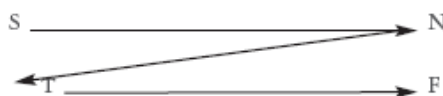
ISTJ (Analytical manager of facts and details) Firm administrator	ISF (Sympathetic managers of facts and details)	INFJ (People-oriented innovators of ideas)	INTJ (Logical, critical, decisive innovators of ideas)
ISTP (Practical analyzers)	ISFP (Observant, loyal helpers)	INFP (Imaginative, independent helpers)	INTP (Inquisitive analyzers) Practice group leader
ESTP (Realistic adapters in the world of material things)	ESFP (Realistic adapters in the human relationships)	ENFP (Warmly enthusiastic planners of change) Lead marketer	ENTP (Inventive, analytical planners of change) Managing partner Marketing partner Practice group leader
ESTJ (Fact-minded practical organizers)	ESFJ (Practical harmonizers) Marketing assistant	ENFJ (Imaginative harmonizers)	ENTJ (Intuitive, innovative organizers)

PROBLEM-SOLVING METHODS: CAPITALIZE ON STRENGTHS AND AVOID WEAKNESSES

One way of making certain you are covering all the bases is to use the “Six Thinking Hats” technique, outlined by Edward de Bono in his book of the same name. The hats stand for different perspectives to be used in approaching a decision:

- White hat: Examine the facts
- Red hat: Consider feelings surrounding the issue
- Black hat: Review the negative effects of the decision
- Yellow hat: Look at the positive aspects of the decision
- Green hat: Consider alternatives
- Blue hat: Identify which type of thinking is going on

Another option is the Zig-Zag problem-solving method, a tool designed to remind users to include all of the core mental functions. Many MBTI® practitioners utilize this method, which draws



on the core strengths of the four innate mental habits: Sensing, Intuiting, Thinking, and Feeling.

Starting with S – Sensing, define the problem being tackled. Take care to define the problem accurately and succinctly. Gather data. Check facts. Dig

for the details necessary to address the issues. When you believe you have gathered the facts and figures to the best of the ability of a person whose preference is sensing (whether that is your preference or the group’s), move to N – iNtuiting. Now, you or the group use the skills that someone with a preference for intuiting would use to generate options, alternatives, scenarios. Come up with as many options for a solution as possible.

People and groups will often move to the analysis phase (where you use T skills) when they have generated one possible solution. They say, “We’ve got a problem, and we’ve generated a possible solution, so let’s analyze it!” Instead, they would do better to stay in the N phase until they have fully brainstormed potential alternatives. Once the group has a slate of options, move to the T – Thinking phase and consider or analyze the options generated. Use your critical, dispassionate reasoning skills during this phase. Once you have thought clearly about the possible solutions and selected the one deemed the best, call F – Feeling skills into play. Consider the effects or impacts of the proposed solution on all parties involved. If you are a Thinker, ask, “How will this make people feel? What impact will it have on their lives?” Remember to consider the effect on the Thinker, or the person or group considering the possible solution or change as well.

ACHIEVING BETTER RESULTS
When forming a work team – and assuming complete freedom of choice in

composing a team – consider grouping teammates with similar personal styles or types when the work involved is of a routine or structured nature in order to have the most smoothly functioning process and easiest communication. But when the task at hand is more ambiguous or strategic, you may achieve a better result by putting together a group with divergent strengths (or types) and providing the group with training and tools to facilitate their work together.

Individuals can learn that different styles are reflections of innate habits or patterns of thought. They can also learn to communicate their needs or concerns using a common language and without labeling behaviors in ways that seem to be personal attacks. Using tools such as the thinking hats method or the zig-zag problem-solving method, teams can capitalize on their strengths and avoid being blindsided by their weaknesses.

This article originally appeared in the 2008 edition of Professional Legal Management Week Magazine, published by the Association of Legal Administrators. It is published here with the author’s and publisher’s permission. Learn more at Professional Legal Management WeekSM at www.plmw.org.

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