

FactSheet: Turbo Teams

New (or Existing) Teams Can Always Use a Boost. *Team Assessment and Development*

Executive Summary

- Studies of successful teams provide significant evidence that an effective team delivers much more than the sum of its parts.
- In addition to clarity of purpose, constructive interpersonal relationships are important for team success.
- It is important to examine collectively other issues, such as how team members solve problems and how the team is led, in the early stages of team development.
- Many team building activities are too heavily focused on the “touchy-feely” relationship-building aspects of working in a team.
- There are a number of scientifically proven tools, including MBTI®, for assessing and addressing team development.



Dave Ulrich, in his groundbreaking book *Human Resource Champions* (1997) reminds us that studies of high performing teams provide evidence that teams can leverage average individual talents into superior collective achievements. While a team is no more than a group of people with a common goal, we all know that politics, different opinions, lack of clarity of direction and conflicting personalities can make teamwork much more complex than simply getting a group to work towards a common goal.

Assessing and improving team performance is perhaps one of the most scientifically tested areas of occupational psychology. One of the simplest, and yet most powerful and well researched, frameworks for understanding team dynamics was developed in the 1940's and 1950's by Isabel Briggs Myers and Katharine Briggs, and is now known as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI®).

While a common goal is obviously critical to team success, constructive interpersonal relationships play a major part in team dynamics as well. The early activities of teams tend to be focused on practical issues but relationship problems do develop as they do in any human system. By the time these interpersonal issues

surface, the team may have made significant progress and these issues may become difficult and costly to work out at a later stage. There is a significant payoff if a new team takes a short time, using a tool such as MBTI, at the beginning of its life to examine how it is going to work together.

The down side of many team building activities is that they sometimes are focused exclusively on the “touchy-feely” relationship-building aspects of working in a team.

It can also be helpful to take stock, at any stage of a team's lifecycle, of other issues including the nature of communication, how team members process information differently, how team members make different judgements and how the leader (and possibly others) controls and directs the team.

How does examining these issues help the bottom line? Anthropologist Margaret Mead said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has”. High performing teams can achieve substantially more for your organisation.

Think of a team in your organisation and consider these questions as an indication of how healthy the team is:

- Does the team have a clear sense of direction?
- Are team members clear on their responsibilities, and are their responsibilities motivational?
- To what extent are processes such as sharing information, holding meetings, setting goals, identifying and solving problems and evaluating progress understood and agreed collectively within the team?
- How are positive and negative practices/behaviours rewarded or discouraged in the team?

To kick-start a new team, or to optimise the performance of an existing team, consider the following:

- Set ground rules on how the team will operate. **Put in place a disciplined (but not overly rigid) approach to getting things done. These help to build trust between team members.**
- Clarify the purpose of the team at an early stage. **Ask yourself the question, “is this really a team?” (is there a clear goal) and “do we really need a team?” (or a team for the sake of it?).**
- Give due consideration to how and when the team's efforts will be acknowledged and openly appreciated. **Equally, consider how negative behaviour will be addressed.**



0207 060 1646 (Tel)

0207 060 1647 (Fax)

Info@PinnaclePerformance.co.uk

www.PinnaclePerformance.co.uk

© 2005 Pinnacle Performance Associates

Pinnacle Performance Limited, trading as Pinnacle Performance Associates
Registered Office Gladstone House, 77-79 High Street, Egham, Surrey TW20 9HY
Company Registration 5326486