THE FIVE BEHAVIORS OF A COHESIVE TEAM™

Patrick Lencioni

BASED ON THE NEW YORK TIMES BEST-SELLING BOOK
The Five Dysfunctions of a Team

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(8 people)
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The Five Behaviors of a Cohesive Team

Are you part of a truly cohesive team?

As much effort as it takes to build a cohesive team, the process does not have to be complicated. In fact, keeping it simple is critical. Based on the best-selling book, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team* by Patrick Lencioni, this report is designed to provide a clear, concise, and practical guide to improve your team.

Quite simply, a cohesive team needs to master five behaviors: building trust, mastering conflict, achieving commitment, embracing accountability, and focusing on results. Before you begin, bear in mind that

- Each behavior builds on the previous one, so the behaviors should not be addressed in isolation of one another.
- Team members need to have a meaningful understanding of themselves and their peers, which is why this report is reinforced by DiSC®, a powerful behavioral tool that has been helping people connect better for years.

You and your team are about to embark on what could be a very challenging—and very enlightening—journey. Before you begin, take a look at the overview of the five behaviors below:

Trust One Another

When team members are genuinely transparent and honest with one another, they are able to build vulnerability-based trust.

Engage in Conflict Around Ideas

When there is trust, team members are able to engage in unfiltered, constructive debate of ideas.

Commit to Decisions

When team members are able to offer opinions and debate ideas, they will be more likely to commit to decisions.

Hold One Another Accountable

When everyone is committed to a clear plan of action, they will be more willing to hold one another accountable.

Focus on Achieving Collective Results

The ultimate goal of building greater trust, healthy conflict, commitment, and accountability is one thing: the achievement of results.

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The Five Behaviors and Your Team

Remember, the five behaviors can be mistakenly interpreted as five distinct issues that can be addressed in isolation of one another. But in reality they form an interrelated model, and neglecting even one of the behaviors can be potentially harmful to the success of a team. Below are your team's results for each behavior, based on the team's responses to the assessment questions.

Summary of Your Team Survey Results

Your assessment scores indicate that all five behaviors are potentially areas for improvement for your team.

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Building Trust

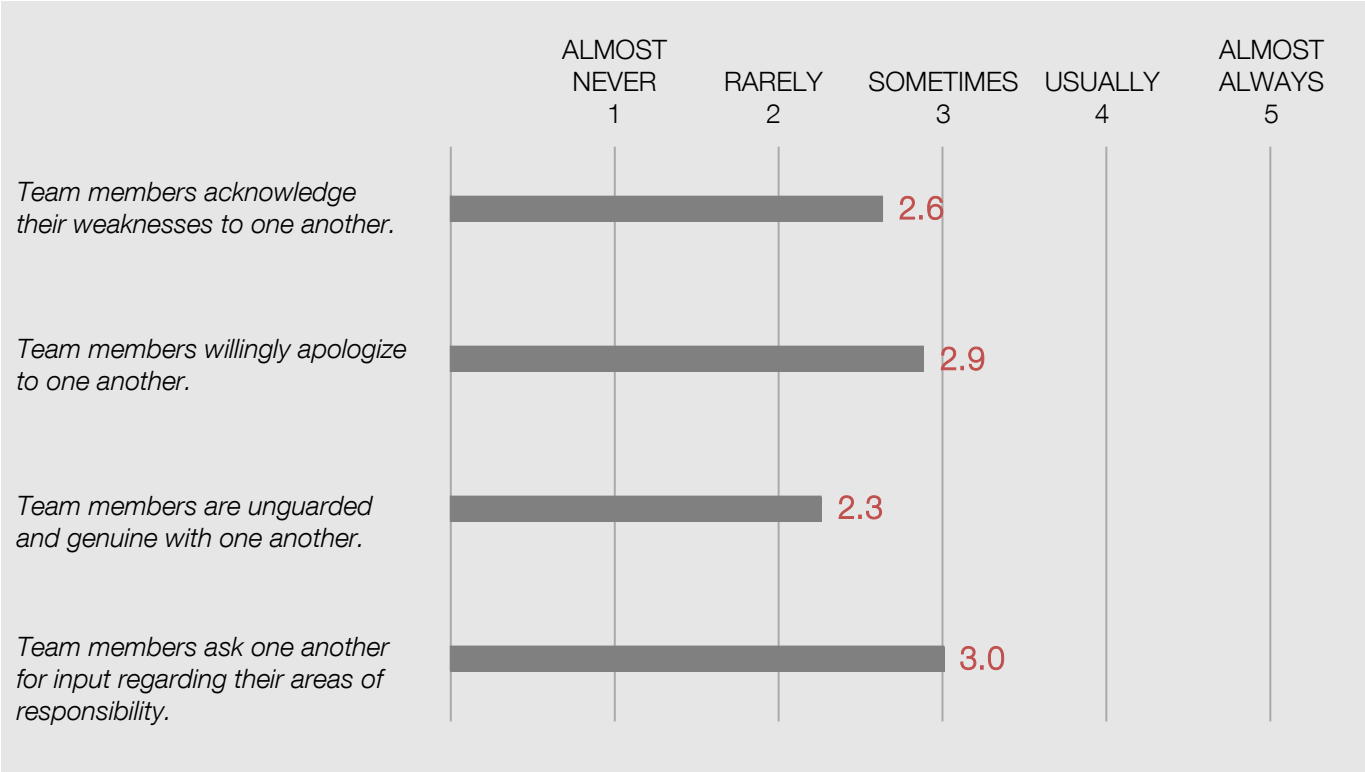
The first and foundational behavior of a cohesive team is trust. Unfortunately, the word trust is used—and misused—so often it may not impart the same meaning to everyone. The definition here isn't centered around the ability to predict a person's behavior based on past experience (a standard description). Rather, in the context of a cohesive team, **trust** means

- a willingness to be completely vulnerable with one another
- confidence among team members that their peers' intentions are good and that there is no reason to be protective or careful around the team

Trust lies at the heart of a functioning, cohesive team. No matter how a team scores on the assessment, teams should always begin with trust because there is no quality or characteristic that is more important for building a team.

Team Survey Results

The following table reflects the team's responses to the trust-related questions from the team survey. The bars to the right of the questions reflect the team's **average score** on the five-point scale. The tables on pages 6-7 identify the distribution of responses within the team.



Your Team's Survey Results for Trust: 2.69 = LOW

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Your Team and Trust

Team members acknowledge their weaknesses to one another.

Almost Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Almost Always
1	2	4	1	0

Members of great teams don't waste time and energy putting on airs or pretending to be someone they're not. Everyone on the team knows that no one is going to hide his or her weaknesses, which helps build a deep and uncommon sense of trust.

However, Kathryn, your team members don't seem to be willing to admit to their weaknesses, at least not to each other. Rather, the members of this team probably hide their personal limitations for fear of what others might think. The only way for your team to begin to build real trust is for team members to come clean about who they are, warts and all.

Team members willingly apologize to one another.

Almost Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Almost Always
1	1	4	2	0

When great teams have vulnerability-based trust, they are completely comfortable being transparent and saying things like "I screwed up" or "your idea was better than mine." The level of trust on a team will improve greatly if members are able to set egos aside in order to move forward.

Although there was some disagreement, most of your team seems to see its members as uncomfortable apologizing to one another for mistakes. People may feel compelled to hide slip-ups and avoid "outing" themselves with direct apologies. Remember that a willingness to say "I'm sorry" is an important contributing factor to establishing trust on your team.

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Your Team and Trust

Team members are unguarded and genuine with one another.

Almost Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Almost Always
1	4	3	0	0

At the heart of vulnerability lies the willingness of people to abandon their pride and their fear and simply be themselves. While this can be a little threatening and uncomfortable at first, ultimately it becomes liberating for people who are tired of overthinking their actions and managing interpersonal politics at work.

However, this type of vulnerability is tough for a lot of teams. As it stands right now, Kathryn, the people on your team may have trouble letting down their guards and showing their true colors. This lack of transparency may hinder the team's ability to have a free exchange of ideas, which, in turn, may challenge the team's ability to build trust.

Team members ask one another for input regarding their areas of responsibility.

Almost Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Almost Always
1	1	3	3	0

When people trust that their teammates have their best interests in mind, they feel comfortable asking one another for input and opinions. They aren't worried about being exposed or shot down.

While not everyone agreed, overall it seems that members of your team may be reluctant to ask for feedback. Team members may think that doing so will make them seem incapable of handling their own work, or maybe they're simply overconfident in their own ideas. Perhaps there is underlying tension that keeps people from sharing. Remember that accepting more input may lead to better ideas or solutions, which, in turn, will drive team success.

How Do We Build Vulnerability-Based Trust? ▶▶▶

Using a behavioral tool like DiSC® can give team members deeper insights into themselves and their peers. It can help people understand each other and get comfortable being transparent about personal limitations.

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Building Vulnerability-Based Trust

Sometimes it's during the process of coming clean about weaknesses that the biggest breakthroughs happen among team members. Giving people as much information as possible about who a person is and why this person might act the way he or she does will greatly reduce the likelihood of unfair judgments. DiSC® can help people gain insight and empathy, qualities that allow a team to build trust.

Everything DiSC®

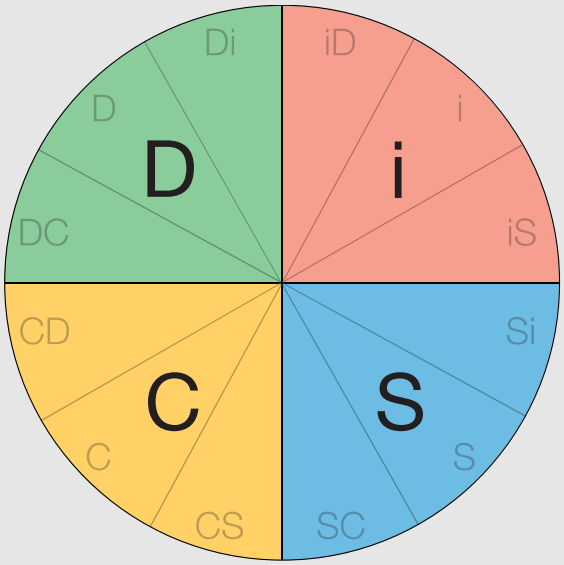
The Everything DiSC® model is made up of four basic styles: Dominance (D), Influence (i), Steadiness (S), and Conscientiousness (C). Each style is divided into three regions. The picture below illustrates the four DiSC styles.

Dominance (D)

- Direct
- Results-oriented
- Firm
- Strong-willed
- Forceful

Influence (i)

- Outgoing
- Enthusiastic
- Optimistic
- High-spirited
- Lively



Conscientiousness (C)

- Analytical
- Reserved
- Precise
- Private
- Systematic

Steadiness (S)

- Even-tempered
- Accommodating
- Patient
- Humble
- Tactful

Keep in mind that everyone is a blend of all four styles, but most people tend strongly toward one or two styles. Whether a person is in the center of one style or in a region that borders two, **no location is better than another.** All DiSC styles are equal and valuable in their own ways.

Your DiSC Style and Story ▶▶▶

Next, you will learn your DiSC style and read your story, which will lay the groundwork for learning, sharing, and building vulnerability-based trust on your team.

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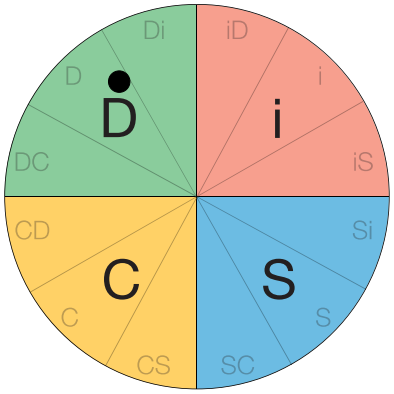
The Impact of Your DiSC® Style

Your DiSC® style: D

Kathryn, you're probably a very driven person with a high need for variety and forward momentum. So, you may get easily bored or restless if forced to slow down for too long. In fact, sitting still may be agonizing for you. Therefore, when you reach your goals, instead of celebrating, you quickly shift your attention to the next objective.

Since you probably like to get things out the door quickly, you may emphasize results over how you get there. Consequently, you're willing to question the rules if you think they don't make sense. And if something goes wrong, you'll do whatever it takes to save the situation.

People with the D style may have little patience for small talk, and you may grow restless listening for long periods without the opportunity to speak. You're also quick to dismiss people whom you see as incompetent, and it may be hard for you to hide your annoyance. When you're irritated, people know it. And when you get really upset, you may let nonverbal signals do the talking.



Your dot location is near the edge of the circle, so you probably relate well to the characteristics associated with the D style.

You have a strong competitive side and may actually be energized by antagonism or conflict. In fact, the idea of losing is probably more upsetting to you than it is to most people. You may suspect that people are driven by self-interest and will take advantage of you if you let them. Consequently, you're unlikely to take kind words at face value, but rather you may look for underlying intentions.

You tend to speak up when you see a problem, even when no one else will. And although you may realize that others can be taken aback by your directness, you're unwilling to compromise what you see as honesty. It is this intensity that may cause others to worry that you're irritated with them. However, making an effort to meet people's emotional needs may require more energy than you're often willing to expend.

Although everyone questions their decisions from time to time, you probably do it less often than most people. Those with the D style usually exude self-confidence. This can be infectious, and others may wind up feeling good about your bold plans. However, your strong belief in your opinions, coupled with your tendency to dismiss the opinions of others, may give some people the impression that you are arrogant. It may be difficult for you to admit that you sometimes need to depend on others.

You probably like to be in charge. You may even take control over projects where authority was meant to be divided, alienating some people. This is particularly true when you feel that others are not competent to carry out your vision or don't see it as clearly as you do. You may encourage input when there is no question that you are in command, but quickly disregard those opinions that conflict with your ideas. Once you've had your say in the important decisions, however, you may be more than willing to delegate.

Kathryn, like others with the D style, your most valuable contributions to the workplace may include your drive to get results, your tendency toward bold action, and your willingness to challenge assumptions. In fact, these are probably some of the qualities that others admire most about you.

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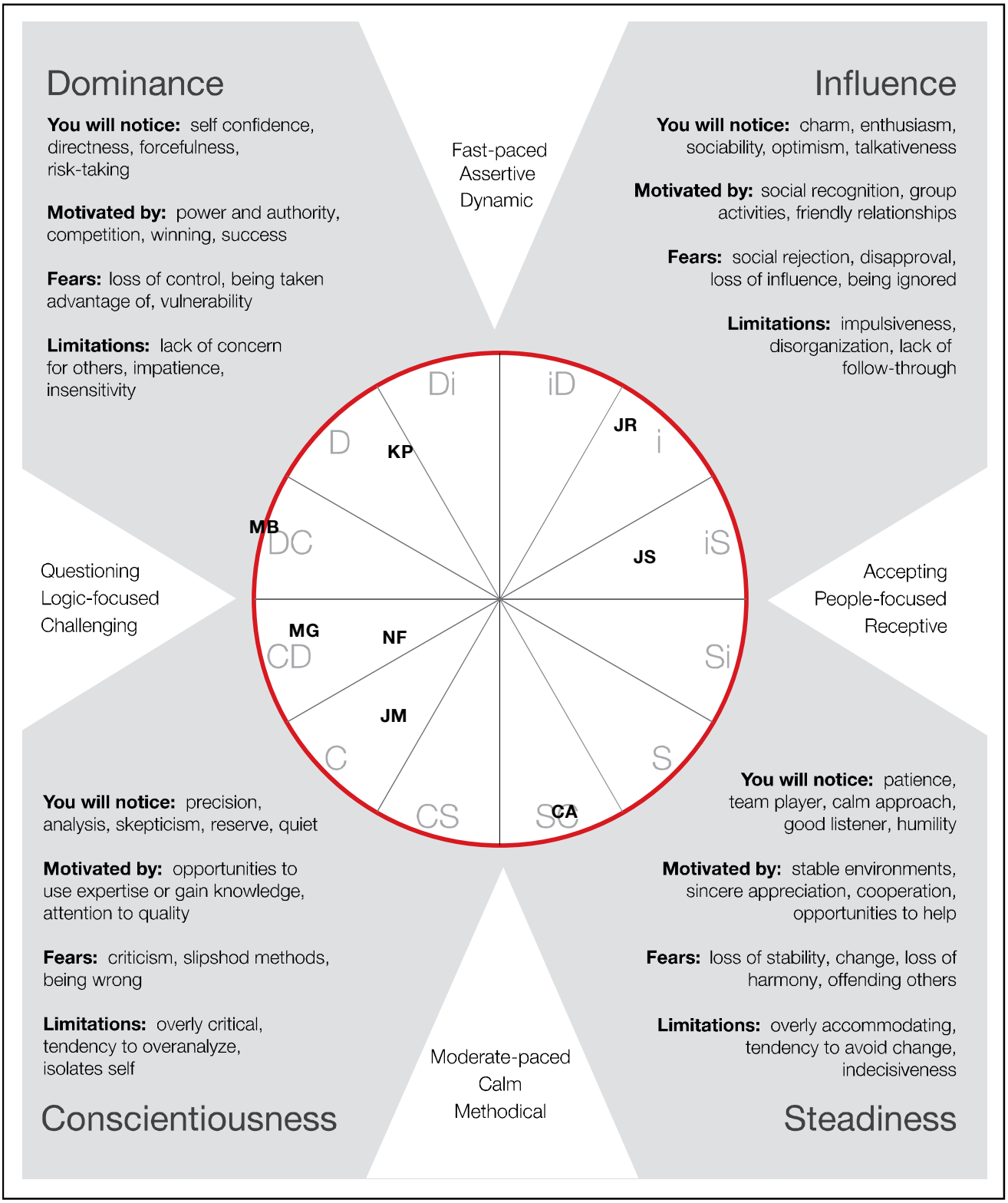
The Everything DiSC® Team Map

The Everything DiSC® map below shows the locations of all team members along with a snapshot of the characteristics tied to the four basic DiSC® styles.



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Building Trust

What is needed to achieve trust?

As part of the assessment, you and your team members also had an opportunity to identify specific areas for the team to focus on in the interest of building trust. The number of people (out of 8) who selected each response appears in the corresponding box below. Note: You had the option to select all that apply.

There would be more trust on our team if people:

7	Reduced the amount of gossiping	2	Got to know each other on a personal level
6	Admitted their mistakes	1	Readily apologized
5	Let go of grudges	1	Spent more time together
5	Understood each other's working styles	0	Shared professional failures and successes
4	Were more forthright with information	0	Would give credit where credit is due

Points of Discussion

1. A number of group members felt that there might be more trust on the team if the amount of gossiping was reduced. How has this hurt trust in the past? Are people ready to let go of that past? What is it going to take to reduce gossiping?

2. Trust might also improve if people more readily admitted their mistakes. Why would not admitting mistakes be an obstacle to trust? How valuable would it be to the group's effectiveness?

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Taking Action to Build Trust

How does a team go about developing vulnerability-based trust? Unfortunately, it cannot be built overnight. It requires shared experiences over time, multiple instances of follow-through and credibility, and an in-depth understanding of the unique attributes of team members. However, taking a focused approach, a team can dramatically accelerate the process and build trust in relatively short order. Consider the importance of building trust, outlined below, as you create an action plan.

Without Trust, Team Members…

- Conceal their weaknesses and mistakes from one another
- Hesitate to ask for help or provide constructive feedback
- Hesitate to offer help outside their own areas of responsibility
- Jump to conclusions about the intentions and aptitudes of others
- Hold grudges

If a Team Is Trusting, Team Members…

- Admit their weaknesses and mistakes
- Ask for help
- Accept questions and input about their areas of responsibility
- Give one another the benefit of the doubt before arriving at a negative conclusion
- Offer and accept apologies without hesitation

Action Plan

Use the following questions to help build an action plan for your team.

1. Based on your team survey (on page 5), trust may be a stumbling block for this team. Why do you think this is so? What three things could the team do to improve the level of trust?

2. According to the team survey (on page 5), your team rated itself lowest on being "unguarded and genuine with each other." What team behaviors most likely prompted people to rate this area low?
What steps can the team take to help members be more open with one another?

The Connection to Conflict ▶▶▶

When team members build a foundation of vulnerability-based trust, conflict simply becomes an attempt to find the best possible answer.

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Mastering Conflict

All great relationships, the ones that last over time, require productive conflict in order to grow. It's important to distinguish productive, ideological conflict from destructive fighting and interpersonal politics.

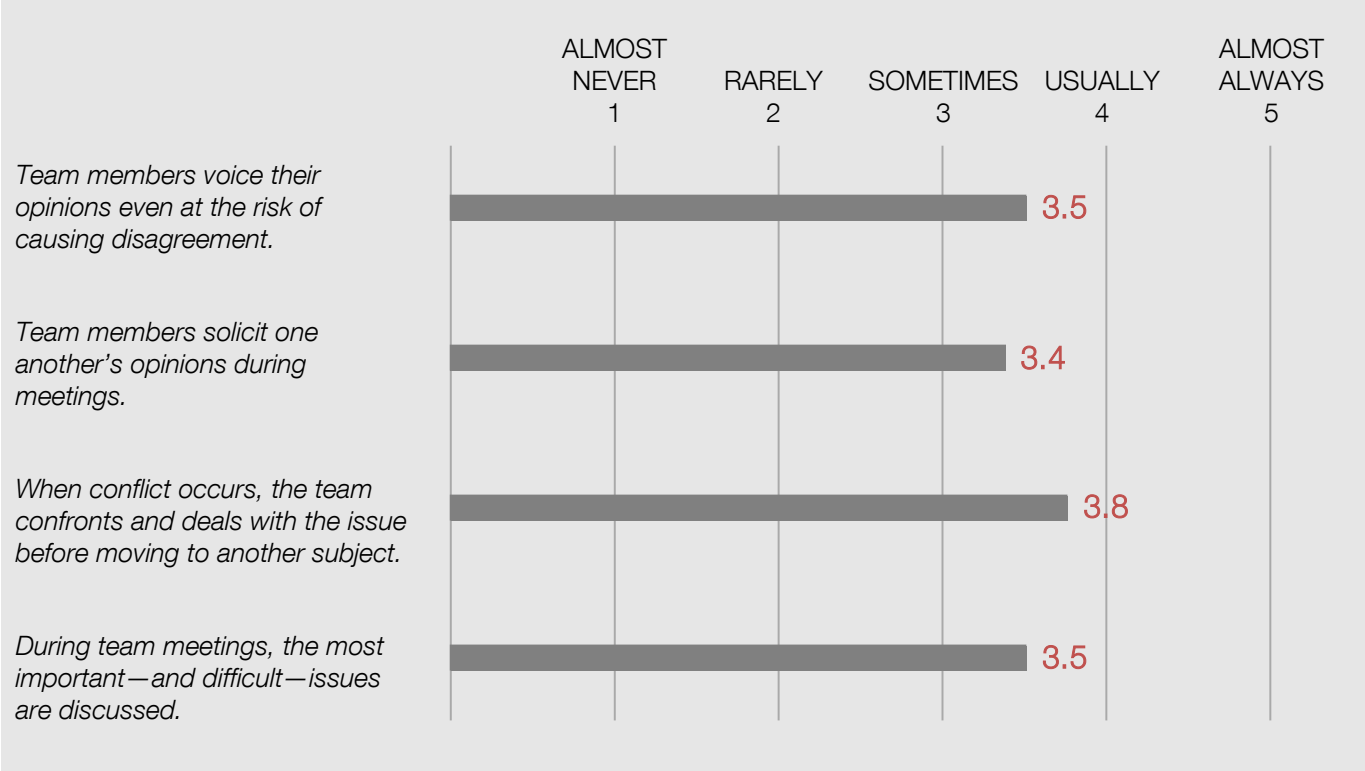
Productive conflict

- is focused on concepts and ideas
- avoids mean-spirited, personal attacks

Conflict is often considered taboo, especially at work, and people may spend inordinate amounts of time and energy trying to avoid the kind of passionate debates that are essential to any great team. Teams that engage in productive conflict know that the only purpose is to produce the best possible solution in the shortest period of time.

Team Survey Results

The following table reflects the team's responses to the conflict-related questions from the team survey. The bars to the right of the questions reflect the team's **average score** on the five-point scale. The tables on page 14 identify the distribution of responses within the team.



Your Team's Survey Results for Conflict: 3.53 = MEDIUM

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Conflict on Your Team

Team members voice their opinions even at the risk of causing disagreement.

Almost Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Almost Always
0	1	3	3	1

Your team seems to agree that members often voice opinions and debate important ideas. Occasionally, team members may withhold their opinions, perhaps to avoid conflict or to maintain diplomacy. A willingness to engage in productive conflict, however, makes it possible to resolve issues more quickly, which leads to higher-quality solutions without damaging team relationships.

Team members solicit one another's opinions during meetings.

Almost Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Almost Always
0	1	4	2	1

It seems that your team members solicit one another's opinions only some of the time. It may be that people are fearful of having their ideas shot down or are resistant to input. However, drawing out everyone's point of view is important and can help the team gain valuable insight. Furthermore, it will lay the foundation for making commitments.

When conflict occurs, the team confronts and deals with the issue before moving to another subject.

Almost Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Almost Always
0	2	1	2	3

There isn't a consensus as to whether your team directly confronts conflict. It may be that some disagreements are handled differently than others, or perhaps some team members see smoothing over an issue as a way to deal with it. Nonetheless, by avoiding conflict, your team may waste more time by having to revisit unresolved issues.

During team meetings, the most important—and difficult—issues are discussed.

Almost Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Almost Always
0	1	4	1	2

It's often the most important issues that can be the touchiest and hardest to discuss. Generally, your team seems willing to take the risk of broaching these topics during meetings, although people may occasionally hold back to avoid hurting others' feelings or starting a battle. An open discussion, however, will help get to the heart of problems so you can resolve them and move forward.

The Impact of Your DiSC® Style

It's important to understand that different people participate in conflict in different ways. We all have our own preferences and tendencies. And that's okay, because there is more than one way to engage in healthy conflict. Kathryn, because you have a D style, you probably aren't afraid to address conflict head-on. In fact, since you tend to be competitive, you may even value winning at all costs. Though you may get your way by being forceful, you may also fail to uncover the true source of the problem. Also, be careful that your directness isn't perceived by others as a personal attack. The following describes how you may react to conflict:

- You may embrace conflict as a win-lose scenario.
- You may be energized by the competitive aspects of conflict.
- When disagreements occur, you may become argumentative and fail to find common ground as a basis for a resolution.

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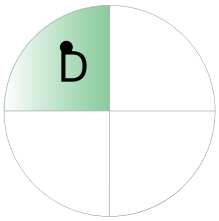
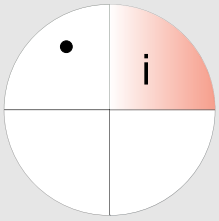
Your D Style in Conflict



Conflict with the D Style

Because neither you nor others who share your D style are inclined to gloss over differences or avoid confrontation, conflicts between you may be very direct and even argumentative. You may find that disagreements with "D" coworkers often become competitive and heated. As a result, you may fail to find the common ground needed to come to a resolution. Therefore,

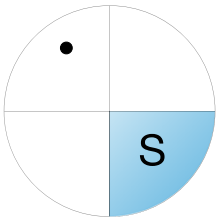
- Address the situation directly, but avoid becoming overly insistent.
- Focus on resolving the issue rather than on winning.
- Stay away from destructive fighting and personal attacks.



Conflict with the i Style

Because people with the i style want to maintain friendly relationships, they're more likely to gloss over differences initially, whereas you tend to address issues head-on. However, since self-expression is also important to your i coworkers, they may insist on being heard, even if it means becoming emotional or lashing out. Consequently, tense situations between you may escalate quickly. Therefore,

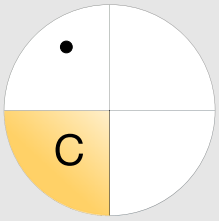
- Be careful that your directness doesn't come across as a personal attack.
- Express a desire to work through the conflict productively.
- Let them know that a heated debate will not leave residual feelings.



Conflict with the S Style

Because you probably confront issues more directly than your "S" coworkers do, your approach may overwhelm them, causing them to give in simply to avoid prolonging the conflict. While you may think you have convinced them, this aggressive approach could undermine their trust in you and allow their buried resentment to build. Therefore,

- With diplomacy, focus on uncovering the true source of the conflict.
- Avoid forceful tactics that may leave them feeling anxious or resentful.
- Don't interpret their silence as a resolution to conflict.



Conflict with the C Style

Because people with the C style may view conflict as a disagreement over who is right, they usually avoid direct aggression and instead focus on the facts. In contrast, you may become more aggressive or competitive during a confrontation. Since your "C" coworkers prefer to have time to process situations objectively, they may withdraw or become defensive in response to more forceful tactics. Therefore,

- Tone down your sometimes aggressive approach.
- State your position objectively, and give them time to present their side.
- Support your opinions with logic and facts.

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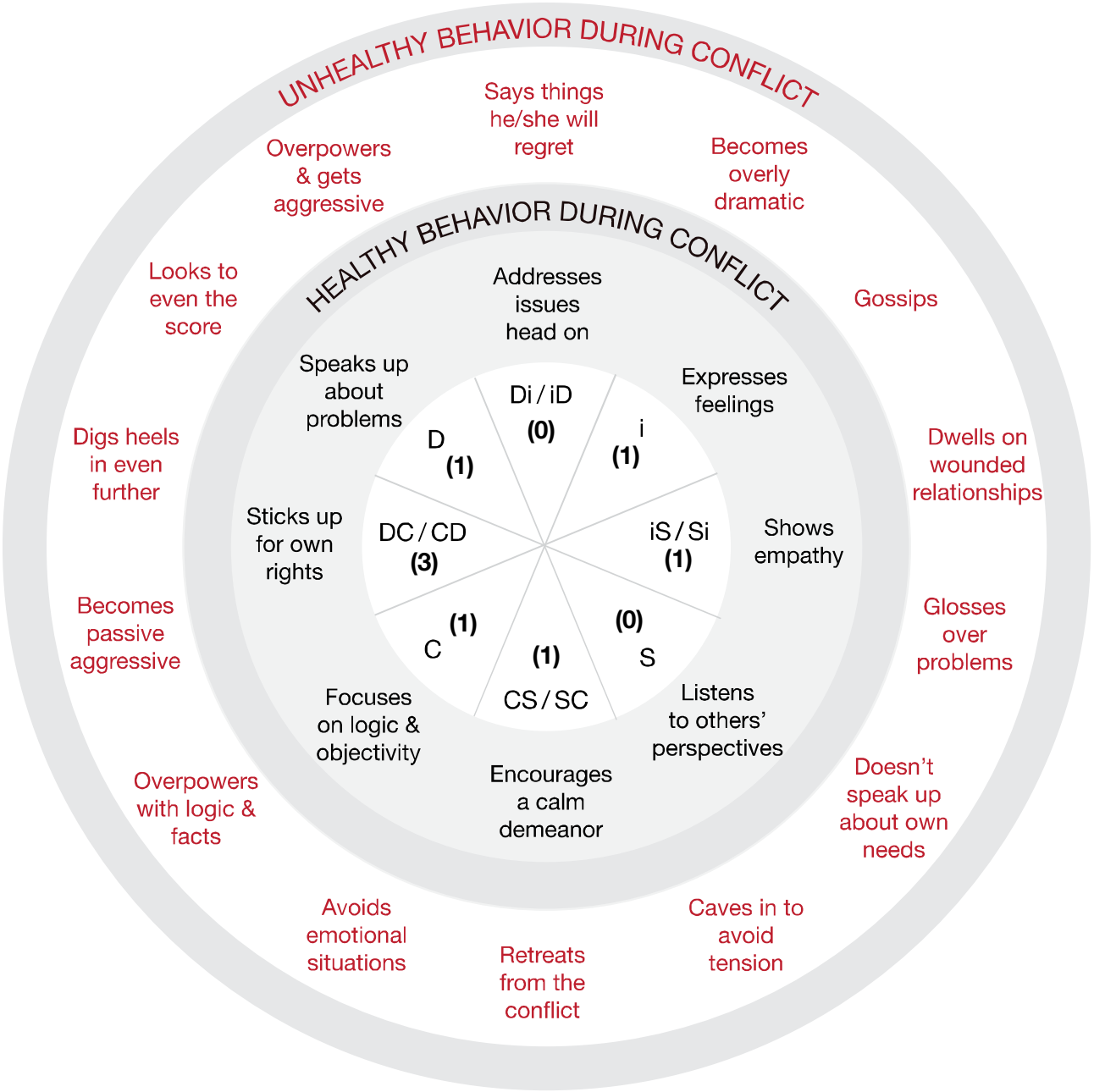
Conflict Team Map

The descriptions on the inner, gray circle illustrate what healthy behavior during conflict might look like. The descriptions in red on the outer circle illustrate unhealthy behavior related to each style. The numbers in the innermost circle reflect the **people on your team** who fall into each of the style regions (out of 8 people).



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Mastering Conflict

What is acceptable behavior during conflict?

In some cultures, there is very little direct disagreement and debate during meetings, while in others people tend to "get in one another's faces." In some families, parents and siblings rarely engage in raw, emotional dialogue, while in others people argue passionately and then make up with equal passion. Which is better on a team? The only thing that really matters is—are people holding back their opinions? Members of great teams do not.

As part of the assessment, you and your team members were asked whether you think certain behaviors or actions are acceptable while engaging in conflict at work and how many of you display them (last column). Here are the results of the team survey (8 people):

Response to Conflict	Unacceptable	Tolerable	Perfectly Acceptable	*Number of team members who admit they do this at work*
Raising your voice when you get passionate	1	4	3	3
Going beyond the meeting end time to resolve an issue	0	4	4	8
Using strong language when you're upset	3	5	0	0
Avoiding someone when you're angry	5	3	0	6
Excluding other team members from difficult conversations	1	2	5	5
Being outwardly emotional	4	1	3	4
Expressing anger through indirect actions rather than voicing it directly	7	1	0	2

Points of Discussion

1. Why does "using strong language when you're upset" bother some people more than others? What guidelines could the team enact to ensure a balance between these different perspectives?

2. The team also disagreed about "avoiding someone when you're angry." Why do people see this issue differently? What ground rules can the team agree upon?

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Taking Action to Master Conflict

How does a team go about developing the ability and willingness to engage in healthy conflict? The first step is acknowledging that conflict can be productive, and that many teams have a tendency to avoid it. As long as some team members believe that conflict is undesirable and unnecessary, there is little chance that it will occur. Consider the importance of engaging in conflict, outlined below, as you create an action plan.

A Team That Fears Conflict…

- Has boring meetings
- Creates environments where personal attacks thrive
- Ignores controversial topics that are critical to team success
- Fails to tap into all the opinions and perspectives of team members
- Wastes time and energy with posturing and interpersonal risk management

A Team That Engages in Conflict…

- Has lively, interesting meetings
- Extracts and exploits the ideas of all team members
- Solves real problems quickly
- Minimizes politics
- Puts critical topics on the table for discussion

Action Plan

Use the following questions to help build an action plan for your team.

1. Based on the team survey (page 13), your team does a reasonable job at handling conflict, but there's still room for improvement. What specific fears or behaviors are most likely preventing productive conflict?

2. What concrete benefits would the team see if it had healthy conflict more often?

The Connection to Commitment ▶▶▶

By engaging in productive conflict and tapping into a variety of perspectives and opinions, team members can confidently commit and buy in to a decision knowing that they have benefited from everyone's ideas.

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Achieving Commitment

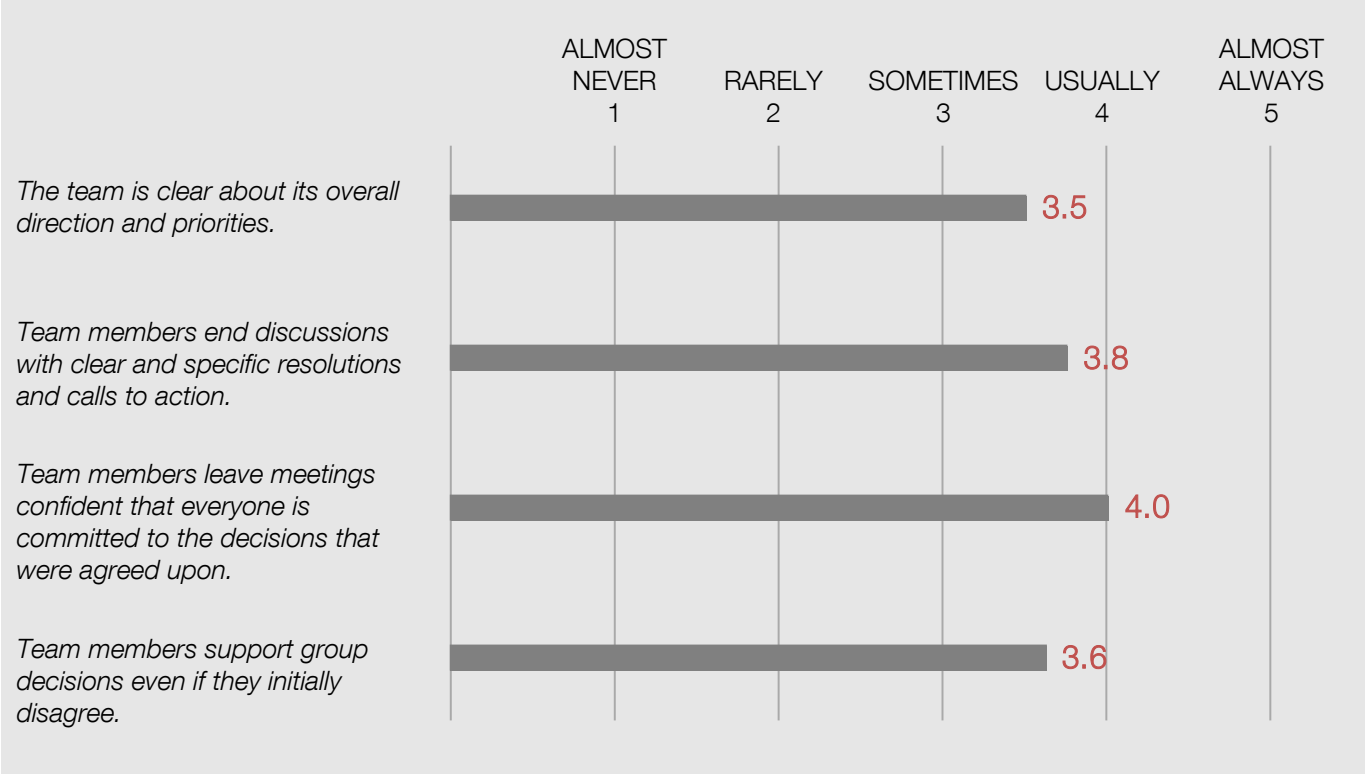
What do we mean by commitment? In the context of a cohesive team, **commitment** is

- clarity around decisions
- moving forward with complete buy-in from every member of the team, even those who initially disagreed with the decision

The bottom line is, if people don't commit, they're just half-heartedly going along with decisions. The two greatest causes of a lack of commitment are the desire for consensus and the need for certainty, which are just not possible in all situations. Great teams understand that they must be able to commit even when the outcome is uncertain and not everyone initially agrees.

Team Survey Results

The following table reflects the team's responses to the commitment-related questions from the team survey. The bars to the right of the questions reflect the team's **average score** on the five-point scale. The tables on pages 20 and 21 identify the distribution of responses within the team.



Your Team's Survey Results for Commitment: 3.72 = MEDIUM

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Commitment with Clarity

The team is clear about its overall direction and priorities.

Almost Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Almost Always
0	1	2	5	0

Team members will be unlikely to commit to decisions that seem vague or incomplete. After all, how can you really commit if you're not sure what you're *committing to*? It seems that your team is clear about its direction and priorities most of the time. It may be that sometimes, though, the team lacks clarity. Ensuring that everyone is on the same page may allow the team to commit to decisions and move forward with confidence.

Team members end discussions with clear and specific resolutions and calls to action.

Almost Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Almost Always
0	0	3	4	1

At the end of every meeting, cohesive teams take a few minutes to ensure that everyone sitting at the table is walking away with the same understanding about what has been agreed to. It appears that team members leave meetings with a clear understanding of the next steps most of the time. This means that there are also times when team members may be confused. Making the effort to review commitments will likely lead to smoother and more successful implementations of team decisions.

The Impact of Your DiSC® Style

Kathryn, with your D style, you tend to focus on the bottom line. So it may be particularly frustrating for you if you're on a team that doesn't clearly define its goals. Yet, you're also assertive, and you're not afraid to call the shots if no one else is doing so. However, this can lead to confusion if the rest of the team is not committed to the same priorities.

Consider how other DiSC® styles may react to a lack of clarity:

- D coworkers are likely to push back on and resist decisions they don't understand.
- i coworkers are prone to impulsiveness and may be disorganized at times, so without clear goals they may simply fail to follow through.
- S coworkers may second-guess themselves and their work, which may impede their productivity.
- C coworkers tend to be solitary and may simply focus on their own objectives, deepening the sense of misalignment.

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Commitment with Buy-In

Team members leave meetings confident that everyone is committed to the decisions that were agreed upon.

Almost Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Almost Always
0	1	1	3	3

Great teams move forward with complete buy-in from every member of the team. Members leave meetings confident that no one is quietly harboring doubts about whether to support the agreed-to actions. According to the assessment results, your team frequently achieves this alignment. Most likely, your team has a habit of openly airing doubts or concerns so that people feel a stronger commitment to final decisions. This may allow decisions and plans to take hold more quickly.

Team members support group decisions even if they initially disagree.

Almost Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Almost Always
0	1	2	4	1

Commitment does not mean consensus. It's important to understand the danger of seeking consensus and find ways to achieve buy-in even when complete agreement is impossible. Reasonable human beings do not need to get their way in order to support a decision, but only need to know that their opinions have been heard and considered. Your results indicate that the team is often able to gain this sort of support for team decisions. Occasionally, however, people may feel that others are holding back their opinions or aren't truly committed—even if they say they are. Remember, ensuring that every member of the team feels heard sets the stage for real commitment.

The Impact of Your DiSC® Style

Kathryn, like others with a D style, you're probably not afraid to speak up about your doubts, which will ultimately make you more apt to buy in to decisions. Having had your say, you may then assume everyone is as confident as you are in the decisions that are made. It may not occur to you that some people might be reluctant to voice their opinions. Still, getting results is probably more important to you than consensus. You'll likely support a decision if you think it will get you to the finish line, even if you initially disagreed.

Consider how other DiSC® styles approach commitment:

- D coworkers have a take-charge attitude and want to make up their minds quickly.
- i coworkers rely on personal relationships and may be more apt to commit when they feel a sense of team spirit.
- S coworkers are careful decision-makers and want to be absolutely sure before they commit.
- C coworkers are swayed by objective information rather than emotion or intuition.

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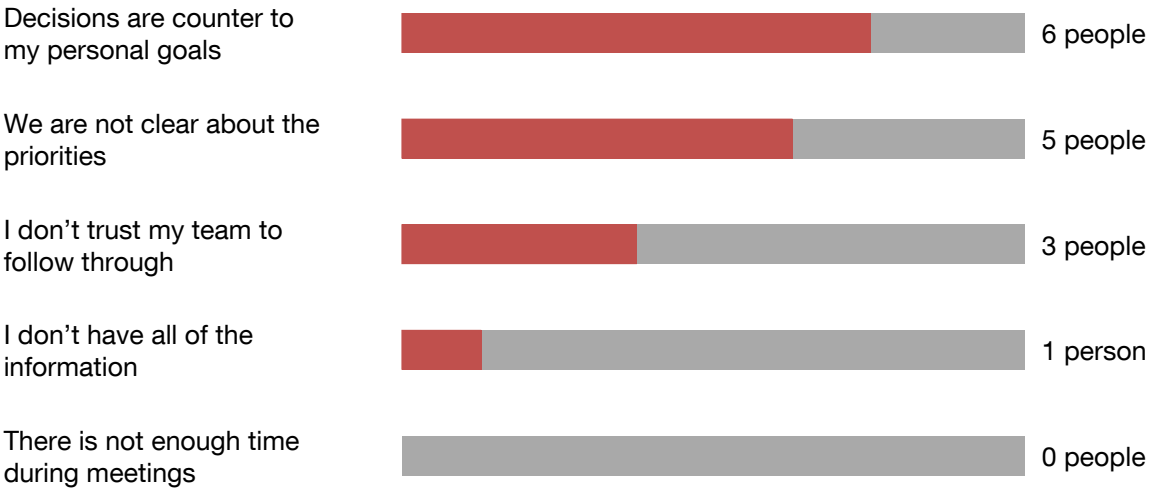
Achieving Commitment

Why don't our team members commit?

As part of the assessment, you and your team members also had an opportunity to identify reasons that could be contributing to a lack of commitment. The number of people (out of 8) who selected each explanation appears next to the corresponding bar below. Note: You had the option to select all that apply.

I sometimes don't buy in to the team's decisions because:



Points of Discussion

1. Based on your team's responses above, some members of the team seem to believe team goals sometimes conflict with personal goals. How can the team do a better job at discussing this conflict of interest when it comes up?

2. Commitment on the team may also suffer because people think priorities are not clear. How often do people speak up when they encounter this issue? What can be done to ensure team priorities are clear?

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Taking Action to Achieve Commitment

One of the greatest consequences for a team that does not commit to decisions is unresolvable discord. When a team fails to achieve buy-in from all team members, even if the disparities that exist seem relatively small, there will be a clash of priorities. And small gaps can become major disagreements. Consider the importance of commitment, outlined below, as you create an action plan.

A Team That Fails to Commit…

- Creates ambiguity among the team members about direction and priorities
- Misses opportunities due to excessive analysis and unnecessary delay
- Breeds lack of confidence and fear of failure
- Revisits discussions and decisions again and again
- Encourages second-guessing among team members

A Team That Commits…

- Creates clarity around direction and priorities
- Aligns the entire team around common objectives
- Develops an ability to learn from mistakes
- Moves forward without hesitation
- Changes direction without hesitation or guilt

Action Plan

Use the following questions to help build an action plan for your team.

1. Based on the team survey (page 19), the overall level of buy-in on the team is fairly high. Are there any specific areas where the team has trouble getting full buy-in? If so, describe one and come up with a way to overcome it.

2. The team survey also suggests that your group has a moderate level of clarity around its decisions. Describe the areas that are currently unclear. List specific ways that clarity can be achieved.

The Connection to Accountability ▶▶▶

If everyone is clearly committed to the team's priorities, they will be more willing to hold one another accountable.

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Embracing Accountability

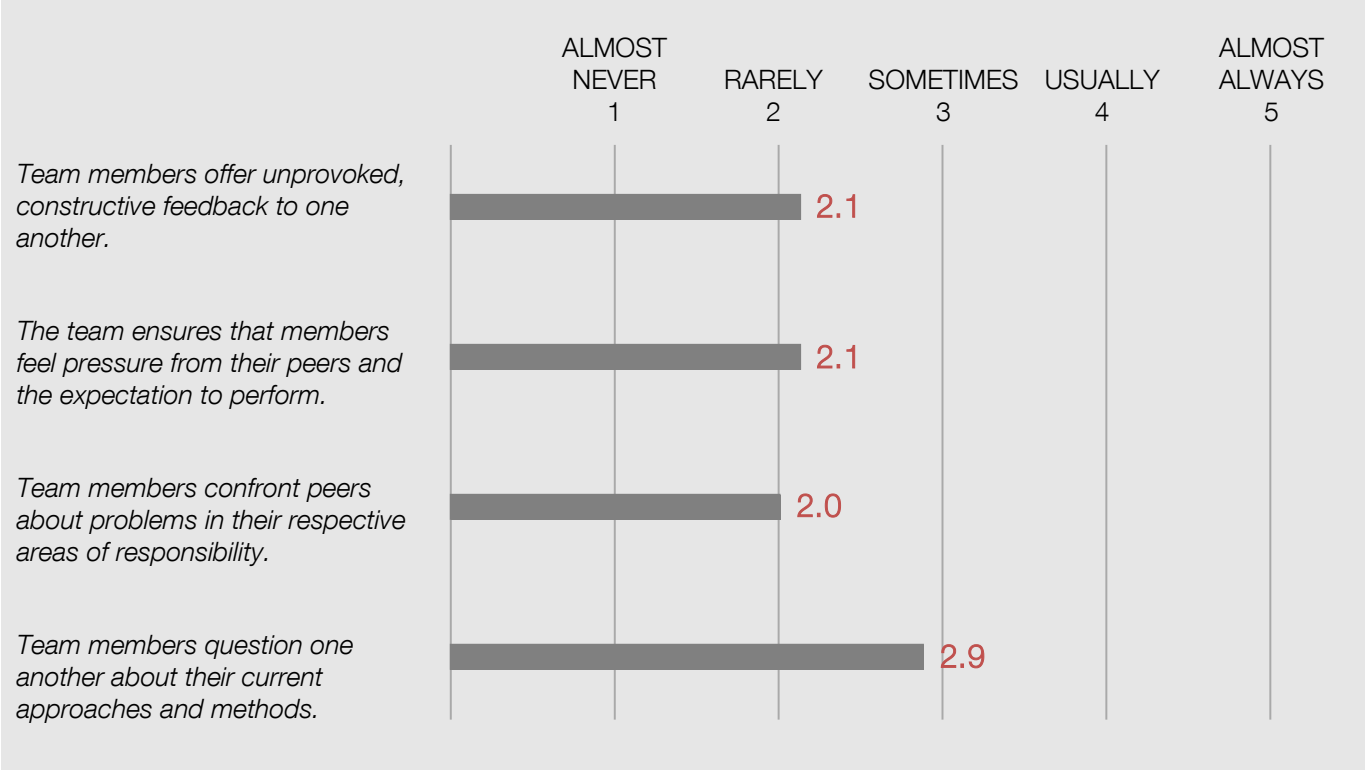
Accountability has become a buzzword—so overused and with so many different interpretations that it has lost much of its meaning. In the context of teamwork, however, **accountability** is

The willingness of team members to call their peers on performance or behaviors that might hurt the team

The usual source of dysfunction in this area is the unwillingness of team members to tolerate the interpersonal discomfort that accompanies calling out a peer on his or her behavior. This includes the more general tendency to avoid difficult conversations. Functional teams overcome these natural inclinations, opting instead to "enter the danger" with one another.

Team Survey Results

The following table reflects the team's responses to the accountability-related questions from the team survey. The bars to the right of the questions reflect the team's **average score** on the five-point scale. The tables on pages 25-28 identify the distribution of responses within the team.



Your Team's Survey Results for Accountability: 2.28 = LOW

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Your Team and Accountability

Team members offer unprovoked, constructive feedback to one another.

Almost Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Almost Always
1	5	2	0	0

Great teams are able to call out members' poor performance or unproductive behaviors. However, your team may have trouble in this area. Even team members who are particularly close to one another may hesitate to call one another out precisely because they fear jeopardizing that relationship. Ironically, this only causes relationships to deteriorate. The willingness to hold one another accountable in a constructive way is key to developing cohesiveness and can help a team avoid far more costly and difficult situations later.

What does it look like when team members . . .

DON'T call out poor performance:

- Team members lack confidence and are paranoid about what others may not be saying.
- People feel a sense of unfairness when others perform at a subpar level.
- Passive-aggressive approaches start to thrive.

DO call out poor performance:

- People know what others think so they don't have to waste time and energy wondering.
- Team members own their shortcomings and accept suggestions.
- There is an increased sense of being part of a team.

The Impact of Your DiSC® Style

Kathryn, because you have the D style, you tend to be ambitious and determined. When others don't meet your standards, you're probably not shy about giving them direct feedback. And although some may find this blunt or insensitive, you probably feel that your candor offers people an honest dose of reality.

Consider how other DiSC® styles prefer to receive productive feedback:

- D coworkers prefer a straightforward delivery.
- i coworkers want a positive explanation.
- S coworkers prefer a considerate but direct delivery.
- C coworkers want a truthful, logical explanation.

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Your Team and Accountability

The team ensures that members feel pressure from their peers and the expectation to perform.

Almost Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Almost Always
2	3	3	0	0

More than any policy or system, there is nothing like the fear of letting down respected teammates that motivates people to improve their performance. However, your team members don't seem comfortable applying appropriate pressure to each other. Perhaps people don't think it's right to push their peers, or maybe they're afraid that this sort of pressure will create unhealthy conflict. Nonetheless, peer pressure is a highly effective and efficient means of maintaining high standards on a team.

What does it look like when team members . . .

DON'T apply peer pressure:

- Outside management or motivation may be needed to reach set goals.
- People aren't concerned with how their behavior affects their team members.
- Resentment builds.

DO apply peer pressure:

- Team members feel trusted and respected by their peers.
- There is an extra prompt to get work done on time.
- People feel a responsibility to get things done right.

The Impact of Your DiSC® Style

Kathryn, your D style suggests that you prioritize results and the end goal over interpersonal relationships. In fact, you tend to keep the goal foremost in mind, and you may encourage your team to share this focus on achievement. However, since you tend to be independent and confident, you aren't troubled by what people think. In other words, you probably apply pressure more than you feel it.

Consider how other DiSC® styles may be motivated to improve performance:

- D coworkers may be motivated by competition and challenging projects that will garner respect.
- i coworkers may be motivated by positive energy and encouragement.
- S coworkers may be motivated by opportunities to support people and contribute to team success.
- C coworkers may be motivated by defining quality standards and completing complex assignments.

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Your Team and Accountability

Team members confront peers about problems in their respective areas of responsibility.

Almost Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Almost Always
3	3	1	1	0

On effective teams, members are able to confront one another when things aren't going well. Your team seems to agree that members are unwilling to challenge one another about what's being done, how time is spent, and whether enough progress is being made. It can be hard to hold people accountable when they are intimidating, defensive, or even overly accommodating. However, making the effort to confront issues head on will allow the team to more easily identify and resolve problems before they get out of hand.

What does it look like when team members . . .

DON'T challenge one another:

- There is limited understanding and interest in what other team members are doing.
- There are misconceptions among team members, causing an overall sense of disjointedness.
- People feel comfortable doing subpar work, knowing they won't be confronted.

DO challenge one another:

- People have a better understanding and appreciation for one another's roles.
- People continually check in with one another, ensuring they're on the same page.
- Better ideas emerge.

The Impact of Your DiSC® Style

Like others with your D style, Kathryn, you're probably assertive, and therefore not afraid to be forceful when necessary. Confrontation doesn't make you uncomfortable, and because you are so driven to succeed, you won't stand by quietly if you think someone is dragging you down or not doing his or her part. In fact, you may be quite outspoken in your criticism when others have not performed to your expectations.

Consider how other DiSC® styles may react to being confronted:

- D coworkers often need to be convinced before they will change their minds or behaviors.
- i coworkers typically don't want people to be angry or upset with them.
- S coworkers are often eager to compromise and tend to listen to other people's opinions.
- C coworkers may want facts and need proof that they're wrong before they will take corrective action.

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Your Team and Accountability

Team members question one another about their current approaches and methods.

Almost Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Almost Always
0	3	3	2	0

When team members know that their colleagues are truly committed to a common goal, they can question one another without fearing defensiveness or backlash. After all, they're merely helping someone get back on track or seeking clarity about something that doesn't seem right. However, it doesn't appear that all the members of your team feel comfortable questioning one another about approaches and methods. It's possible that some team members fear confrontation, or perhaps expectations are not always clear, making it difficult to call someone out. Learning to hold each other accountable will benefit the team, allowing higher levels of respect and productivity.

What does it look like when team members . . .

DON'T question one another:

- Mistakes are made.
- Team members aren't clear about one another's roles and responsibilities, leading to misunderstandings.
- Team members fear stepping on one another's toes.

DO question one another:

- Team members understand how everything fits together.
- People are prepared to answer inquiries.
- Team members are able to adjust their behavior accordingly.

The Impact of Your DiSC® Style

Kathryn, you likely want to control outcomes and you're probably forthright with your questions and skepticism. You usually say what you think without worrying about other people's reactions. If you have a question about the way something is done, you'll ask, which may seem abrasive or intrusive to your more passive coworkers.

Consider how to question other DiSC® styles about their current approaches and methods:

- D coworkers appreciate a direct approach. Remember not to confuse their confidence with competence.
- i coworkers may improvise and make spontaneous decisions, so be proactive in asking for detailed explanations of their approach.
- S coworkers don't want to be rushed for answers, but you may need to ask enough questions to unearth any concerns they have with their roles or responsibilities.
- C coworkers may become defensive if the quality of their work is called into question. Be sure to back your opinions with facts, and give them time to think over your suggestions.

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Embracing Accountability

What are your team's accountability needs?

As part of the assessment, you and your team members also had an opportunity to identify aspects of your team's practices that could use improvement—or areas where it would be possible and desirable to hold one another more accountable. The number of people (out of 8) who selected each improvement appears in the corresponding box below. Note: You had the option to select all that apply.

Our ability to hold one another accountable could improve if we challenged one another to:

7	Call one another on unproductive behaviors	1	Follow through on personal commitments
5	Give one another feedback	0	Address missed deadlines immediately
4	Have clearer priorities and goals	0	Be more direct
3	Review progress against goals during team meetings	0	Publicly share goals
2	Have more efficient and productive meetings	0	Spend more time together

Points of Discussion

1. One of the most frequently selected areas in the table above is "call one another on unproductive behaviors." What current problems are related to this issue? How comfortable are people challenging each other to do this more often?

2. Another highly selected area is "give each other feedback." How would the team benefit if people challenged each other to do this more often? How realistic is that goal for this team?

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Taking Action to Hold One Another Accountable

It must be clear to all team members that accountability is a shared team responsibility. As uncomfortable and difficult as it can often be, accountability helps a team and an organization avoid far more costly and difficult situations later. Consider the importance of accountability, outlined below, as you create an action plan.

A Team That Avoids Accountability…

- Creates resentment among team members who have different standards of performance
- Encourages mediocrity
- Misses deadlines and key deliverables
- Places an undue burden on the team leader as the sole source of discipline

A Team That Embraces Accountability…

- Ensures that poor performers feel pressure to improve
- Identifies potential problems quickly by questioning one another's approaches without hesitation
- Establishes respect among team members who are held to the same high standards
- Avoids excessive bureaucracy around performance management and corrective action

Action Plan

Use the following questions to help build an action plan for your team.

1. Based on the team survey (page 24), it appears that accountability is difficult for this team right now. List three obstacles that prevent team members from confronting one another and applying peer pressure. List some specific benefits of engaging in these behaviors.

2. On the team survey (page 24), one of the areas where the group rated itself lowest is confronting peers about problems. List some reasons why confrontation is so difficult on your team. What expectations or processes could your team put in place to make confrontation feel less threatening or intimidating?

The Connection to Results

Holding teammates accountable for their contributions and behaviors will keep the team focused on collective results, rather than allowing attention to shift to other areas.

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Focusing on Results

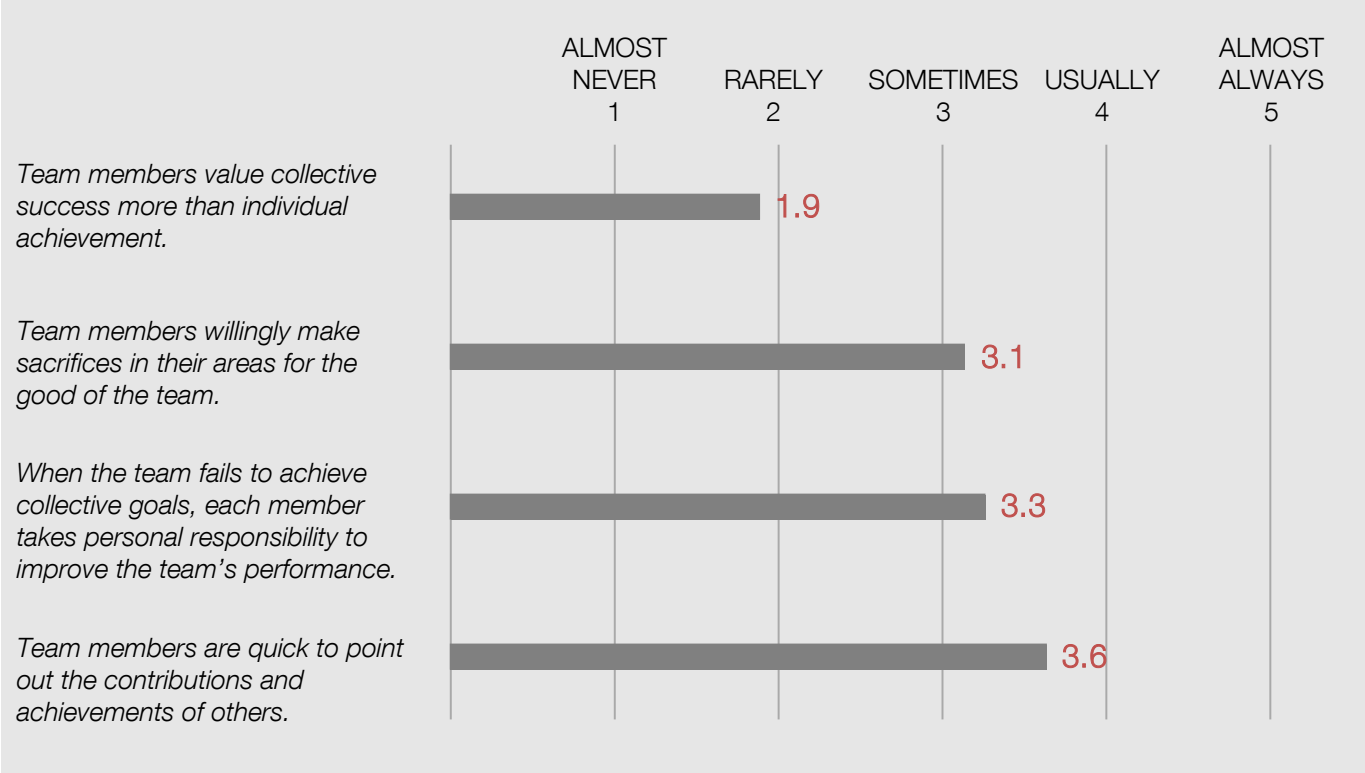
The ultimate goal of encouraging trust, healthy conflict, commitment, and accountability is to achieve results. And yet, as it turns out, one of the greatest challenges to team success is the inattention to results. In the context of a cohesive team, **results**

- refer to the collective goals of the team
- are not limited to financial measures, but are more broadly related to expectations and outcome-based performance

But what would a team be focused on other than results? Team status and individual status are the prime candidates. A focus on team status occurs when merely being part of a group is satisfying enough, regardless of results. Individual status refers to the familiar tendency of people to focus on enhancing their own positions or career prospects at the expense of their team.

Team Survey Results

The following table reflects the team's responses to the results-related questions from the team survey. The bars to the right of the questions reflect the team's **average score** on the five-point scale. The tables on page 32 identify the distribution of responses within the team.



Your Team's Survey Results for Results: 2.97 = LOW

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Your Team and Results

Team members value collective success more than individual achievement.

Almost Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Almost Always
4	1	3	0	0

The members of your team seem to value personal achievement over group success. Though all human beings have an innate tendency toward self-preservation, a functional team must make the collective results of the group more important to each person than his or her own personal goals.

Team members willingly make sacrifices in their areas for the good of the team.

Almost Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Almost Always
0	1	5	2	0

It seems that your team members are only occasionally willing to make personal sacrifices to help the team. Perhaps people are so caught up in their own responsibilities that they don't make the effort to assist their teammates.

When the team fails to achieve collective goals, each member takes personal responsibility to improve the team's performance.

Almost Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Almost Always
0	1	4	3	0

It appears that members of your team may not always take ownership of the team's overall performance. When something goes wrong, they may be tempted to assign blame or to feel that they are not personally responsible.

Team members are quick to point out the contributions and achievements of others.

Almost Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Almost Always
0	2	1	3	2

There was some disagreement on this issue. Some team members may not be paying attention to the team's work, or there may be differences of opinion as to what is praise-worthy. In any case, acknowledging one another in a positive way is a healthy reminder that you're all working toward the same collective goal.

The Impact of Your DiSC® Style

With your D style, Kathryn, getting results is probably one of your topmost priorities, and you are likely to push unwaveringly to win. However, since you tend to be so competitive and independent, you may often put your own interests ahead of the team's collective goals. And since you are so focused on conquering your own objectives, you may not often take the time or energy to show appreciation for the efforts of others.

- When you notice improvements have been made, commend those responsible for a job well done.
- Use your desire to win to motivate less driven members of your team.
- Make the collective results of the team more important than your personal goals.

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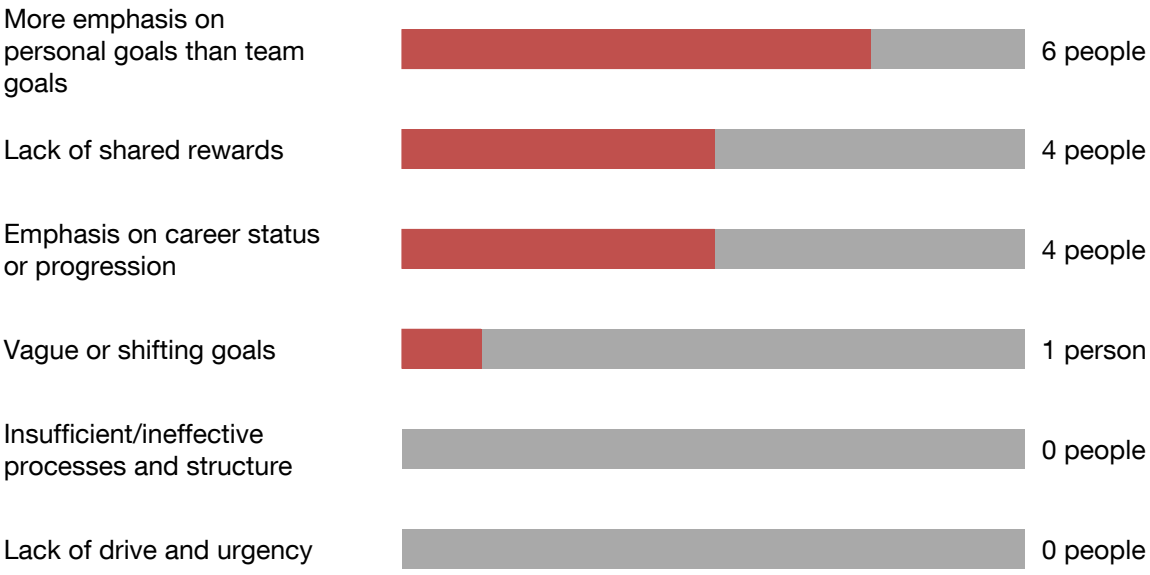
Common Distractions

What is needed to focus on results?

Teams have difficulty staying focused on results because of self-interest and self-preservation. As part of the assessment, you and your team members had an opportunity to identify what you believe might be a distraction from results for the people on your team. The number of people (out of 8) who selected each distraction appears next to the corresponding bar below. Note: You had the option to select all that apply.

Some distractions that keep us from focusing on results are:



Points of Discussion

1. On this team, it appears that personal goals may distract from team goals. Why is this the case? What will need to happen before each person can prioritize the team's goals?

2. Looking at the graph above, a lack of shared rewards may keep the team from focusing on results. In your group, what could "shared rewards" look like?

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Taking Action to Achieve Results

There is no getting around the fact that the only measure of a great team is whether it accomplishes what it sets out to accomplish. Great teams ensure that all members, in spite of their individual responsibilities and areas of expertise, are doing whatever they can to help the team accomplish its goals. Consider the importance of focusing on collective results, outlined below, as you create an action plan.

A Team That Is Not Focused on Results…

- Stagnates/fails to grow
- Rarely defeats competitors
- Loses achievement-oriented employees
- Encourages team members to focus on their own careers and individual goals
- Is easily distracted

A Team That Focuses on Results…

- Retains achievement-oriented employees
- Minimizes individualistic behavior
- Enjoys success and suffers failure acutely
- Benefits from individuals who subjugate their own goals/interest for the good of the team
- Avoids distractions

Action Plan

Use the following questions to help build an action plan for your team.

1. Based on the team survey (page 31), it appears that achieving results is difficult for this team right now. To what degree do team members feel that achieving results is a group effort rather than an individual effort? What specific changes can the team make to help team members feel motivated to achieve team results?

2. One of the areas where your team rated itself lowest is "valuing collective success more than individual success." Do team members call one another out when someone puts his or her personal needs above the team's needs? If not, what are some specific obstacles keeping them from doing so?

Summary ▶▶▶

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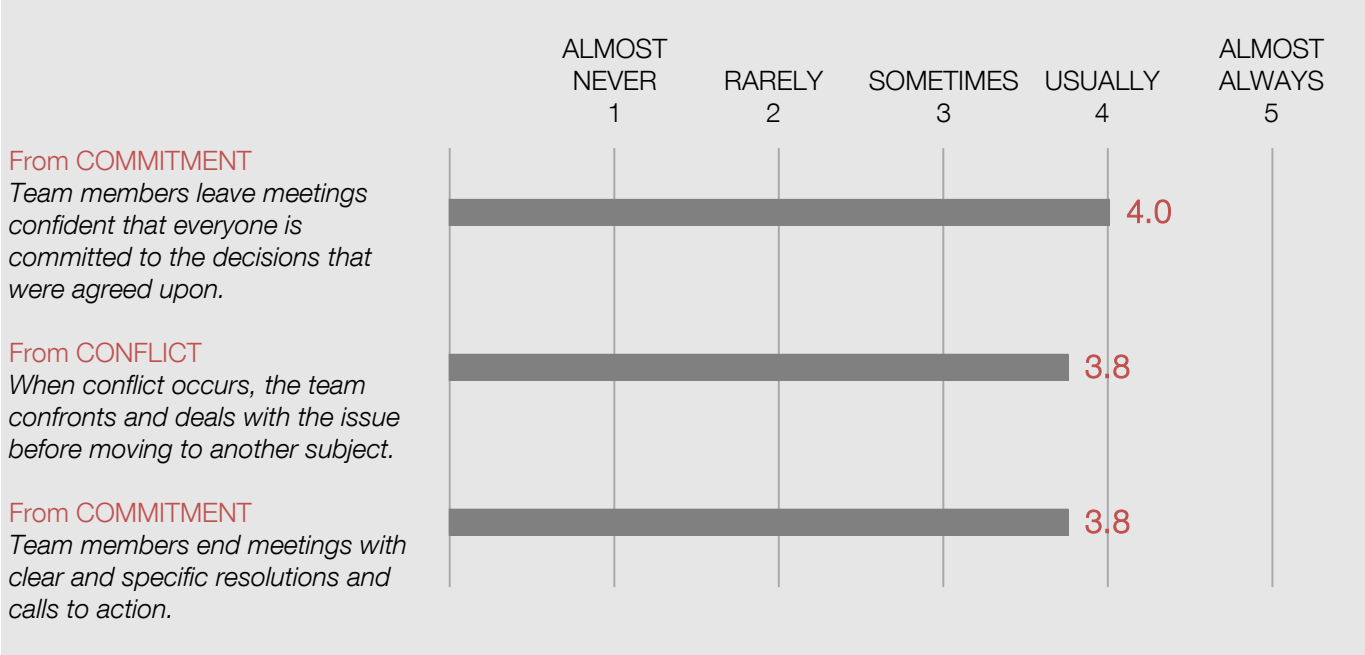
Your Team's Strengths



Recognizing Your Team's Strengths

Based on the assessment, your team members probably demonstrate many of the following strengths:

- Having confidence in the team's ability to act
- Making sure decisions are made so the group can keep moving
- Thoroughness in resolving issues
- A willingness to address problems quickly and directly
- Communicating next steps clearly
- Valuing specificity about team decisions

Points of Discussion

1. As a team, one of your strengths is creating clarity around direction and priorities. What processes or assumptions does your team use to get this sort of clarity?

2. Your team rated confronting and dealing with conflict as one of its highest areas. How do people typically feel after a heated discussion?

3. An area that was higher for your team is the ability to support decisions even when there are initial disagreements. What is the team's process for ensuring that objections get voiced?

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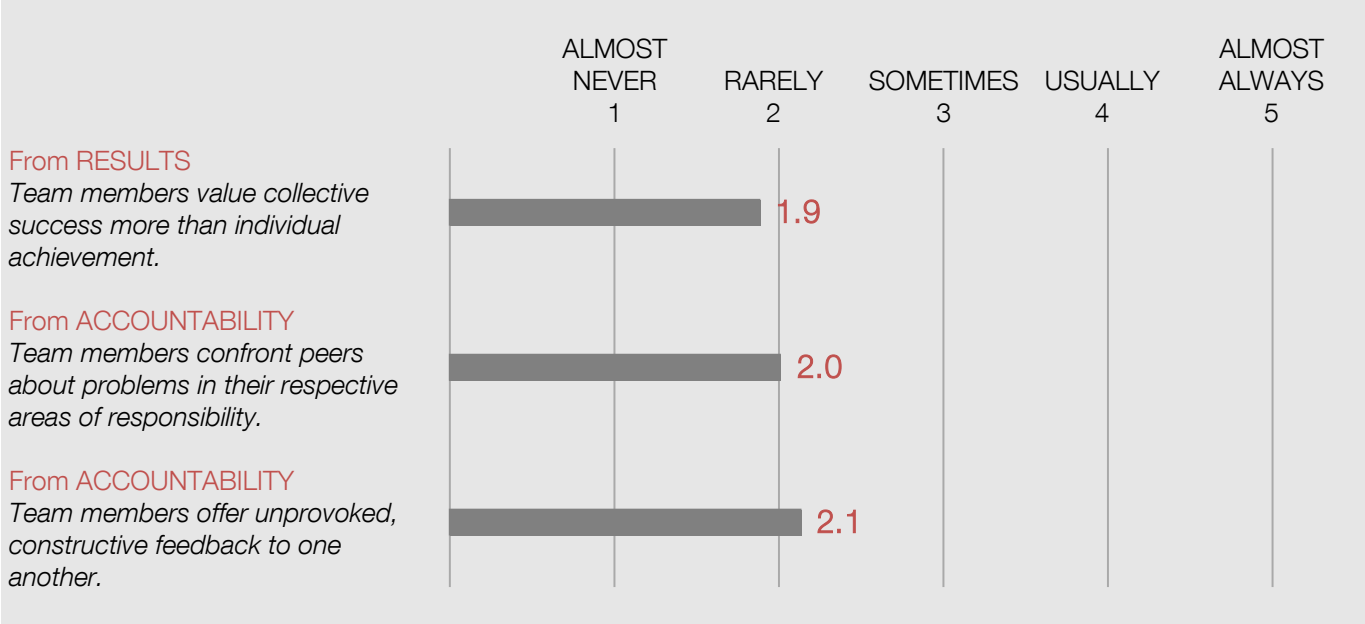
Overcoming Your Team's Challenges



Recognizing Your Team's Challenges

Based on the assessment, your team members probably experience many of the following challenges:

- Personal ambitions interfering with team decision making
- Putting individual accomplishments ahead of team results
- Unwillingness to challenge one another
- Lack of knowledge about all aspects of the team's work
- Fear that direct feedback may jeopardize relationships
- Reluctance to offer honest input

Points of Discussion

1. One of the statements that your group rated lowest is about valuing collective success. Why is it worth spending time to improve in this area? What two changes would make the biggest difference with this issue?

2. Your group also gave lower ratings when asked about confronting each other with problems. What is holding the team back in this area? What will it take to improve the ratings you would give your team?

3. As shown above, the group may also have an opportunity to grow when it comes to giving constructive feedback. How would improving in this area help the team? How can you make that improvement happen?

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