

When collaboration collides with work personality types

By [Frank Reinelt](#)

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In a perfect world, your office would run efficiently and smoothly. Everyone would get along, understand each other and support each other's efforts. Deadlines would always be met and team members would come to work excited about their day. However, in the real world, the workplace is riddled with different office personalities each with their own agenda, ego, and often conflicting goals; resulting in competing and combustible team members.

In order to help you think about how people enable one another in a healthy team environment, or hinder each other in an unhealthy one, Mindjet has built a system called "Workology", which aims to help colleagues understand the innate personality characteristics of their co-workers. By understanding these work personality types, you will be able to collaborate better with your colleagues, leverage individuals' strengths, circumvent their weaknesses, and translate that into greater success.

The Workology "Workplace Zodiac" divides work personalities into eight different types: the General, the Workhorse, the Mediator, the Medic, the Artist, the Dreamer, the Cheerleader, and the Number Cruncher.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator personality rubric

The Workology series is largely rooted in the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator personality rubric, which divides and categorises personalities based on how they experience the world through sensation, intuition, feeling, and thinking. According to Myers-Briggs Type Indicator experts, Robert Kaplan and Dennis Saccuzzo: "The underlying assumption of the MBTI is that we all have specific preferences in the way we construe our experiences and these preferences underlie our interests, needs, values, and motivation." In the same way, Workology attempts to explore not only the work style of each type, but also the underlying personality attributes that make us act the way we do.

By learning what makes each personality tick, leaders can develop new ways of communicating and collaborating, and team members can increase their efficiency and productivity.



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To get the most out of the Workology series, you should first determine what personality you most identify with. Are you an inspiring General, ready to rally your troops to get the job done? An innovative Dreamer, whose big ideas are shaped by your team into concrete plans? A sharp and data-driven Number Cruncher, who deftly analyses and explains complex figures and facts? Each personality provides a valuable piece of the puzzle, is an integral part of producing stellar work and benefits and grows from collaborating with certain others. For example, Cheerleaders offer moral support to embattled Mediators, who must keep a team calm and united in the face of conflict. In turn, Mediators come to the aid of Workhorses, who need to be able to put their heads down and focus in order to get the job done.

Workhorses need to be able to focus so they can better realise the goals of the strategic-minded General. Effective Generals pair up well with Medics, who they can trust to carry out difficult tasks and get the job done. Medics rely on Number Crunchers to provide useful data that will help support their efforts. Number Crunchers need Dreamers to offer input and new perspectives on the data that they're mining. And Dreamers need Artists to turn their ideas into reality. Each personality is a necessary part of the overall makeup, strengthening a team's core DNA.

Still, some personalities function better together than others. For example, Generals may not always understand the more outlandish ideas that Dreamers sometimes present. And Workhorses may not always appreciate the moral support that Cheerleaders provide. Though a team may have collective goals, its means of achieving those ends requires integrating each team member's talents. The Workology site provides a comprehensive breakdown of each personality; tips for

increasing work happiness; and tools that each work "sign" can implement to boost productivity. Please click [here](#) for more information.

Five top tips to promote effective and mindful collaboration

Learning what works best for your personality, and how to overcome potential friction, will give you the keys to maximising your own success and that of your team. When it comes to collaboration, the team that works together effectively and mindfully, regardless of the varying personality types, will benefit from greater team alignment, more innovative ideas, and increased ownership and buy-in for the team's plans and strategies. And the team that doesn't, well, won't.

1. **Clarify your intentions.** Are you solving a problem? Trying to build alignment? Looking for innovation? Defining your strategy? Planning your initiative? Be clear with your intentions. What outcomes are you really seeking? Now, make it more mindful: work out how you will set the tone, create a space that promotes openness and respect, foster inclusiveness and ensure that each team member has had an opportunity to contribute. Take some time to understand how you operate, what personality types you are working with and ascertain the best approach for facilitating your team meeting.
2. **Take care of your language.** What you say will reveal your thought processes. If you think a problem is unsolvable or a waste of time, that will show itself in the meeting. Your choice of words will either encourage or halt progress. Are you cutting down ideas and the flow of conversation too soon? This will ultimately discourage participation - even if you know the ideas will not be used in the long run. Try not to counter or argue, but rather build off the momentum and encourage more ideas to flow.
3. **Observe your behaviour.** Your body language and behaviour speaks volumes. Your behavioural patterns with others will sometimes work in your favour, producing positive results, and at other times will work against you. Become an observer of yourself. Was your last meeting positive or negative? In what ways did your behaviour contribute to the outcome? Getting to know your habits will, ultimately, create more freedom for you to choose how to behave in order to set the stage to achieve your desired results. People will have a sense for what and how you are feeling by how you hold yourself, your tone, how you respond to questions or direct questions at others.
4. **Be caring and curious.** When you approach a room with compassion, people respond positively to that. Stress, on the other hand, tends to be counter-productive as people tend to shut down and become introverted when they are stressed. Being curious and caring will let you (and others) start to see the unique perspectives that each team member brings and you will start to uncover the real issues, not just the superficial ones.
5. **Express disagreements differently.** Mindfulness does not equate to being a pushover. Learn to be direct and assertive, where appropriate, without resorting to attacks, sarcasm or any disrespect. When faced with someone behaving negatively, the tendency is to fall into that trap and respond with a similar tone; but rather be mindful of your original intentions and, while difficult, have compassion for the other party. Most people really want to be heard and are willing to align with the team once they are heard. Be open, be curious, and be respectful.

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