

**FESTO**

Training & Consulting  
White paper

# Putting the 'I' back in TEAM



Celebrating individuality in today's teams



# Introduction



The concept of team has changed in recent years. Traditional assumptions about what makes a team have become outdated, particularly with the advent of virtual teams, for example. There have also been significant changes in the way we work as trends such as remote working and portfolio careers become more popular. This means that to succeed in today's post-recessionary environment, and to ensure continued success in an uncertain world, we need to address what 'team' means in your organisation.

The unattributed quote 'There is no I in team' is in dispute. Teams cannot and should not operate as a homogenised whole. Rather, as we know, each team is a collection of individuals and the success of that team – and the success of the project – depends on autonomous collaboration. This is where individuals understand their role in achieving the task at hand either independently or in collaboration with each other.

There are a number of issues that are raised in collaborative teams. The first is self-awareness of individuals within a team. A new research report by the Chartered Management Institute<sup>1</sup> found that half of managers over-estimate their own performance. This basic lack of self-awareness can be a significant contributory factor to team failure.

The second factor is the clarity of the goal and mission at hand. If there is no explicit guidance about what is to be achieved teams and individuals can often disengage, neglecting their responsibility. It is quite common for teams to report that at every meeting they often go over the same action points and find out that little has been accomplished or achieved.

This brings us onto the third aspect which is the consequence of failure. We will talk more in this paper about lessons learnt from nature and the clear correlation between survival and success. Yet, in organisations, there are often few consequences for a lack of achievement or failure to deliver.

We hope that this paper stimulates debate and we'd be delighted to talk through any aspect in more detail.

Best wishes

Gary Wyles  
Managing Director, Festo Training & Consulting

# Why are teams important?

A key challenge for organisations is winning and retaining profitable clients. As markets are more competitive and products increasingly similar, clients seek suppliers that offer added value and efficiency gains in pre and post sales service. To respond effectively businesses need to directly involve those departments that deliver these services, many of which sit outside traditional sales channels. Organisations also have to adapt to changing circumstances increasingly quickly, and this speed of change places greater challenges on teams.

The second challenge relates to a drive for greater efficiency, cost reduction and profitability. As businesses focus on customer processes and embrace lean thinking it becomes apparent that major inefficiencies are often found between the existing functional areas or departments. Improving business performance means ensuring these connections work well, putting pressure on managers to look for ways to build cross-functional teams that can operate effectively across operational areas.

Productive and proactive teams are an essential part of the success of modern organisations. When teams work well they deliver more than the sum of their members' knowledge and skills, and can stimulate new solutions and deliver increased levels of performance.

# Individuality

While many of us have been brought up to believe that there is no 'I' in team the opposite is, in fact, true. We have managed to lose the sense of individuality and innovation that teams so desperately need to succeed. We argue that celebrating the differences in team members – whether this is in background, experience, skills or behaviour – sets a more stable foundation for effective and autonomous collaboration.

The challenge is to correctly identify the strengths and weaknesses so that individual talent and creativity can be best employed. However, if we rely purely on self-assessment of team members we could be on a hiding to nothing. New research from the Chartered Management Institute (CMI)<sup>ii</sup> reveals that over half of managers misjudge their strengths in the workplace. Of the 2,158 managers polled, almost half (44 per cent) said they excelled at managing people. Twenty-one per cent were target-busters and just 14 per cent felt they were born to lead. The results were strongly contradicted by UK workers who said their managers were focused on getting results (41 per cent). Only 14 per cent excelled at people management.

Identifying different behavioural styles is a valuable tool and can be the key to unlocking the real strengths and potential fault lines within a team. DISC<sup>®</sup> identifies four main styles:

- **Dominance:** People who score highly are active in dealing with problems and challenges, while those with low 'D' scores will want to do more research before committing to a decision.
- **Influence:** High 'I' scorers influence others through talking and activity and tend to be emotional. Those with low 'I' scores are influenced more by data and facts and not by feelings.

# and innovation in teams

- **Steadiness:** People with high 'S' style scores want a steady pace, security, and do not like sudden change. People with low 'S' scores are described as restless, demonstrative, impatient, eager, or even impulsive.
- **Conscientiousness:** People with high 'C' scores adhere to rules, regulations and structure. They like to do quality work and do it right the first time. Those with low 'C' scores challenge the rules, want independence and are often unconcerned with details.

Clearly understanding and capitalising on individual approaches to group processes lies at the heart of creating high performance teams.<sup>iii</sup> Within the skill set there will also be differences in terms of power, value and attitudes. As organisations operate globally these can be magnified when diversity of culture and ethnicity is added to the mix.

This can lead to conflict. "Conflict arises from the clash of perceptions, goals, or values in an arena where people care about the outcome"<sup>iv</sup>. It has been recognised that conflict can either be beneficial or detrimental to the work and cohesion of a team. Managing conflict calls for strong team leadership and most importantly a strong focus



on the task at hand. Clearly understanding and capitalising on individual approaches to group processes is the bottom line in creating high performance teams. While team members work together towards a common goal, individuals must still play their individual roles in the process.

Managing this conflict calls for strong team leadership and most importantly a strong focus on the task at hand. Clearly understanding and capitalising on individual approaches to group processes is the bottom line in creating high performance teams.<sup>vi</sup>



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#### Constructive conflict exists when...

- People change and grow personally from the conflict
  - The conflict results in a win-win solution to a problem
  - It increases involvement of everyone affected by the conflict
  - It builds cohesiveness among the members of the team
- Thomas K. Capozzoli (1995)<sup>v</sup>

#### Destructive conflict exists when...

- No decision is reached and the problem still exists
- It diverts energy away from more value-added activities
- It destroys the morale of the team members
- It polarises or divides the team



# Learning lessons



# from nature

To truly understand how teams can work most effectively we have looked to nature and, in particular, examples of highly effective team work in wolf packs.

The success and survival of wolves is due to the exceptional level of team working that they exhibit. There are specific aspects of wolf packs that contribute to successful team working:

- a clear social structure
- allocated responsibilities
- collective success or failure
- a nurturing attitude
- an ability to adapt size and roles in the pack to the environment and challenges faced

The attitude of the wolf is always based upon the question, "What is best for the pack?".<sup>vii</sup> They know explicitly what needs to be achieved for the survival of the pack. While there are alpha males and females, each member of the pack understands exactly what is expected of them. In truth, there are usually no more than five to eight wolves howling in a pack. The secret is that the wolves are always careful not to duplicate each other. Each wolf assumes a unique pitch, respecting the individuality of the other members of the pack.<sup>viii</sup>

This is also true for organisational team members, when the awareness of each individual is celebrated rather than stifled. Each person must assume his/her share of responsibility for the group by employing their special talents and strengths. By expressing their own individuality and respecting and encouraging the uniqueness of others, the unity of the team becomes a strong, formidable one.

Just as there is an absolute understanding of success for the wolf pack, there are also consequences for failure. In organisational teams, not only does the purpose of the team need to be clear, there also must be clarity about what constitutes failure. These dictate the standards to which the team will perform.<sup>ix</sup> Without both of these aspects being clearly defined, responsibility will not be taken by every individual.



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# 5 stages of team working

Today business success – and survival – depend on getting the very best out of every individual. But even outstanding individual performance is no longer enough: companies need to exploit the synergy between talented individuals to reap the full operational benefits.

We have discussed some of the aspects of identifying individual's strengths and how to build a high performing team. Alongside this we also need to consider the journey of the team itself, and how this impacts on performance, interaction, collaboration and ultimately success. Bruce Tuckman<sup>x</sup> initially identified a four stage process to team building in 1965 – Forming, Storming, Norming and Performing.

In 1977 Tuckman, jointly with Mary Ann Jensen, added a fifth stage to the model – Adjourning. As teams were increasingly transitional, this final stage enabled them to move quickly from one project to another. Their research identified that if one project was not closed effectively, people were not as committed on the next project.

We use this model in our training courses as a way of taking people through each aspect of a team's life.

## Stage: Forming

### Activity:

The first stage is forming the team. The individual's behaviour is driven by a desire to be accepted by the others. Serious issues and feelings are avoided and people focus on being busy with routines such as team organisation, who does what, when to meet, etc. Individuals are also gathering information and making impressions – about each other, the scope of the task and how to approach it. This is a comfortable stage to be in, but the avoidance of conflict and threat means that not much actually gets done.

## Stage: Storming

### Activity:

Every group will then enter the storming stage in which different ideas compete for consideration. The team addresses issues such as what problems they are really supposed to solve, how they will function independently and together, and what leadership model they will accept. Team members open up to each other and confront each other's ideas and perspectives.

This stage is necessary for the growth of the team. It can be contentious, unpleasant and even painful to members of the team who are averse to conflict. Tolerance of each team member and their differences needs to be emphasised, as without these the team will fail. It must be noted that storming does not necessarily result in 'blood on the carpet'. Confrontation is not always visible, but if not identified and dealt with it can lower motivation and become destructive. Some teams never develop past this stage.



## Stage: Norming

### Activity:

The team manages to have one goal and come to a mutual plan for the team. In order to make the team work some members may have to give up their own ideas and agree with others. The team builds up to this stage as it decides on a structure, how to effectively communicate and reaches clarity about personal roles and responsibilities.

In this stage, all the team members take responsibility and have the ambition to work for the success of the goals of the team.

## Stage: Performing

### Activity:

High-performing teams are able to function as a unit as they find ways to get the job done smoothly and effectively without inappropriate conflict or the need for external supervision. The team will be self-aware and will know and be comfortable with its strengths and weaknesses.

This stage is not about performance in terms of results. Good results are not always the outcome of good teams. In a sports analogy a team may play beautifully together but might not win the match.

In a high performing team it's about autonomous collaboration. Participants are able to be themselves, accept each other and have mutual respect. By this time they are motivated and knowledgeable. The team members are now competent, autonomous and able to handle the decision-making process without supervision. Dissent is expected and allowed as long as it is channelled through means acceptable to the team.

## Stage: Adjourning

### Activity:

Adjourning is the break-up of the group hopefully when the task is completed successfully and its purpose fulfilled. Everyone can move on to new things, feeling good about what's been achieved.



# Case study – Hell’s Kitchen

How do you convince highly competent individuals, working in different parts of Europe, of the benefits of working together as a lean and efficient management team? That was the challenge for call centre technology specialist Aspect. So Festo Training & Consulting decided to consign them to 'Hell's Kitchen'.



Aspect Software UK is part of the international Aspect Software group, pioneer of the contact centre industry and the world leader in unified communications for the contact centre. Chris Farnath, Director of the Service Team for Europe and North Africa, had previously used Festo to help develop his team building process, using personality profiling and team building challenges. “We needed to create an effective management team across our locations in the UK and Germany. We have two senior and six middle managers in place, all strong and capable individuals, who are highly effective at managing their own operations – I was looking for a way of getting them to work as a coherent management team, to deliver greater operational efficiencies.”

Management time is precious, so Aspect needed an intensive workshop that would convince the managers of the benefits of working together. It was imperative that all the team members would be taken out of their professional comfort zones and presented with a challenge where failure would have ‘real consequences’. As Chris Farnath explains, “We didn’t want anyone thinking ‘if I don’t do this or if I fail it doesn’t really matter’, so there could be no psychological hiding places for any of the managers – or myself!”

Festo Senior Consultant Mark Hemming needed to come up with a perfect combination of memorable experience and serious learning opportunity, something that would capture the managers’ imaginations and force them to rethink their traditional autonomous working patterns.

The challenge was to be chefs at a five star hotel for the weekend, working in full view of the diners.

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The session achieved all the goals we defined in advance and exceeded our expectations in ensuring that the team worked together with real consequence. From a personal point of view, this was probably the most challenging but valuable team exercise I have ever participated in during my working life.



#### **Hell's Kitchen, full on!**

The first morning and afternoon were spent receiving intensive training from the head chef and his team. This included inductions and introductions, Health & Safety covering hygiene requirements, environmental orientation, basic knife and equipment skills, plus of course an introduction to the menus, ingredients and dishes that they would be preparing for the diners that evening. The challenge was now on for the Aspect management team: to work together to perform to the highest culinary standards.

#### **Instant feedback**

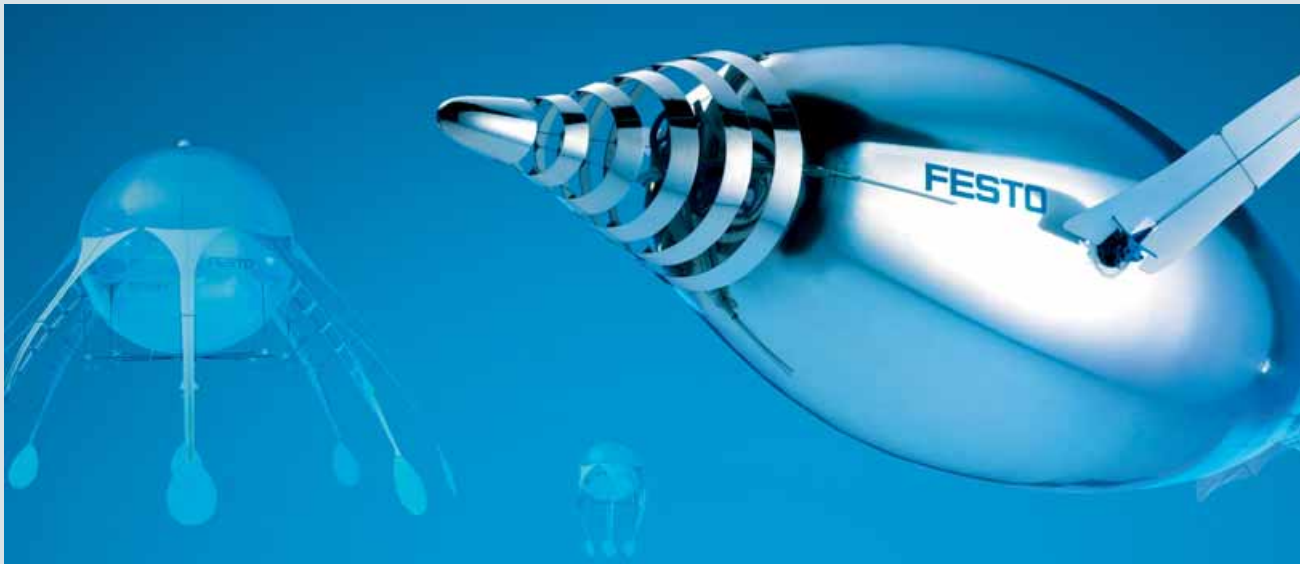
One of the benefits of a challenge with real consequences is that there's instant feedback on what goes right, as well as wrong. Using the restaurant's imaginative 'Tipple Talk' customer experience evaluation tool, diners could simply walk over to the chefs and tell them what they thought of the food. Praise was universal – a hugely valuable reward for team members unused to first-hand customer feedback in their professional environment.

#### **The outcome**

So, the diners had a great meal – how did the team feel about the experience? Chris Farnath commented, "The session achieved all the goals we defined in advance and exceeded our expectations in ensuring that the team worked together with real consequence. From a personal point of view, this was probably the most challenging but valuable team exercise I have ever participated in during my working life."

# Autonomous collaboration industrial

Our research into autonomous collaboration is not just theory; it started with practical application with us investing in research and development as part of our industrial practice. Festo Training and Consulting is part of Festo, an international manufacturing and engineering group.



We first started exploring autonomous collaboration when our Bionic Learning Network, which includes colleges and research companies, decided to explore building robotic devices that mirror how animals relate to each other in their natural environments.

The Bionic Learning Network is a balanced part of the company's research and development strategy. 'Lessons from nature' is not only an inspiring project but one that contributes to the long term health of the company. The project is attracting a lot of attention, inspiring stakeholders and many outside parties towards the projects. They contribute towards the social responsibility of the company to engage with young people, inspiring students to study design, engineering and science for the future. In the medium term they contribute to the intellectual property of the company, developing links with a wide network of academic institutions, creating relationships and directly spinning-off new product developments.

To date we have created replica sting rays, jelly fish and most recently penguins which can fly and swim. Our objective was to gain a closer understanding of how animals respond and communicate with each other, and to build replica devices that go beyond our core business and which may give rise to promising areas of application in the future.

#### **Collective behaviour**

Festo has been able to mimic collective behaviours in nature so devices can be programmed to collaborate autonomously. This requires the ability to define relationships – hierarchical, heterarchical (peer level), or responsible, autonomous collaboration – where all devices understand the task sufficiently to undertake their own role independently in support of and in collaboration with their co-workers.

# in practice



## **Learning from nature – in technology and people processes**

Both humans and animals are elements of a much wider picture, intrinsically linked in a complex web of response and behaviour. Through our research, practical application and people development we gain insight that will always be beneficial to our long term knowledge and development.



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# Conclusion



This paper set out with a simple mission – to put the ‘I’ back into ‘Team’. For too long organisations have thought of teams in only the simple collective term. For teams to be truly successful and to be more than the sum of their parts means individuals not only working to their optimum but also working optimally together.

Autonomous collaboration is a term that has been used in the technology sector and academia, where developers and writers work independently on a project and then collectively combine their thoughts and ideas. In a broader organisational context our thinking defines autonomous collaboration, where every member in a team has an intrinsic understanding of their role in the project, assumes this responsibility and works collectively towards a common goal. This is critical as teams become dispersed and the pace of change continues to accelerate, demanding better results in minimal time.

We have brought together learning from our own organisation and our collaborations through the Bionic Learning Network, our research into nature and wolf packs in particular, and our experience of delivering training and consulting on team work to organisations around the world.

We hope that this paper will help you identify an optimum way for maximising team performance. We would be pleased to discuss any aspect of this White Paper in more detail.

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## Reference

<sup>i</sup> <http://www.managers.org.uk/news/half-managers-misjudge-their-workplace-performance>

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.managers.org.uk/news/half-managers-misjudge-their-workplace-performance>

<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.discprofile.com/team.htm>

<sup>iv</sup> Alessandra, Tony Ph.D. & Hunsaker, Phil Ph.D. (1993) *Communicating at Work*. New York: Fireside Publishers.

<sup>v</sup> Capozzoli, Thomas K. (1995). Resolving conflict within teams. *Journal for Quality and Participation*. Dec 95, Vol. 18, Issue 7, p28-30.

<sup>vi</sup> <http://www.discprofile.com/team.htm>

<sup>vii</sup> Towery, T. L. (1997). *The wisdom of wolves: Nature’s way to organizational success*. Franklin, TN.: Wessex House publishing.

<sup>viii</sup> Johnson, Pamela; Heimann, Virginia; O’Neill, Karen. (2000). *The Wolf Pack: team dynamics for the 21st Century*. *Journal of Workplace Learning*, Volume 12, Number 4. P159-164

<sup>ix</sup> Larson, Carl E and LaFasto, Frank M. (1989). *Adapted from concepts in TeamWork: What Must Go Right/What Can Go Wrong*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

<sup>x</sup> Bruce Wayne Tuckman (born 1938) is an American Psychologist, who has carried out research into the theory of group dynamics. In 1965, he published one of his theories called "Tuckman's Stages". In 1977, he added a fifth stage named Adjourning.

# Questions to identify team working capability

The questions below will help to assist in identifying the strength of your team by highlighting both strengths and potential fault-lines.

- Do team members understand the vision, mission, goals, values and expectations?
- Are team members fully committed to success?
- Have members been trained in team work skills?
- How well is the team leader prepared for their role?
- Do your team members have knowledge of their own profile, and importantly those of their team mates?
- Is communication good within your team – collective and personal?
- How is success celebrated in team working?
- What is the consequence of failure for your team?
- Is each member's role clearly defined?
- How is conflict dealt with in your team? Is it constructive or destructive? What measures do you take to prepare teams to handle conflict?
- Are successful teams replicated in other areas of the business?
- Do team members feel there is linkage between individual success and team success?
- Is learning shared between teams about effective ways of collaborating?
- How is non, poor or bad performance at team level or individually addressed – i.e. if one individual is not 'pulling their weight'?
- What feedback has your team given to management and how has management responded?



### **About Festo**

Festo Training & Consulting specialises in the development of people, organisation and technology. Offering a range of open courses, structured development programmes and tailor-made, customer-specific projects, the business has over 40 years experience when it comes to training clients and helping them achieve their maximum productivity.

The organisation has its roots in manufacturing and engineering. Festo was established in Germany in the 1920s and today operates in 176 countries. Today, Festo trains over 42,000 delegates worldwide every year.

More information on the organisation and the training and consultancy services available can be found at <http://www.festo-didactic.co.uk>

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