

Work Preferences, Leadership and Virtual

Using the Team Management Profile in a Virtual World

Overview

Working virtually is fundamentally different than working face to face. The Team Management Profile (TMP) can be a valuable asset in helping leaders and teams perform effectively in that virtual environment.

This document provides insight into how the TMP can be used as an asset to virtual team performance and how leaders can best use these insights to play their important role in that process.

The models of the TMP are outlined below:

The TMP Equation

The Types of
Work Model

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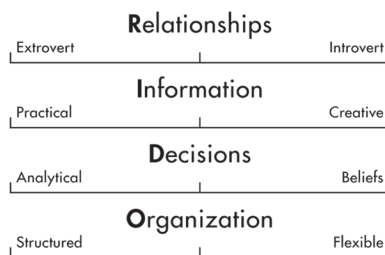
The Measures of
Work Preference

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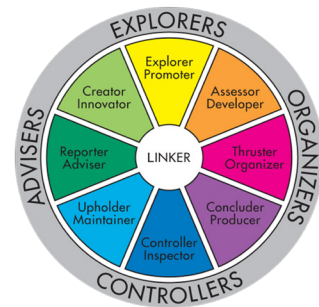
The Team Management
Wheel



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**The work
itself**

**People doing
the work**

**People doing the
work together**

Work preferences are immediately impacted in the virtual environment and it can take some time for people to adjust to those impacts. We'll first take a look at the Measures of Work Preference and see how virtual work may impact those.

On the following pages are the work preference measures of the TMP. The first descriptors outline how that preference often shows up in a typical face to face or co-located team. Beneath that are descriptors of how virtual work may impact that preference and then some ideas for managers and leaders to help their teams adjust to a virtual environment.

MEASURES OF WORK PREFERENCE

Extroversion

Introversion

RELATIONSHIPS



Extroversion

- Will often think things out by talking them through.
- Enjoy meeting other people in the work environment and will often seek out these opportunities.
- Enjoy a variety of tasks and activities.
- Are often stimulated by unanticipated interruptions.
- When speaking publicly will often talk impromptu.
- Likely to contribute readily at meetings.
- Can be impulsive.

Introversion

- Prefer to think things out before speaking.
- Do not have a high need to meet regularly with others.
- Like to concentrate in depth at a few tasks at a time.
- Tend to dislike unanticipated interruptions.
- When speaking publicly will prepare in depth and speak to a plan.
- May be more quiet at meetings or take more time to contribute.
- Likely to consider things before acting.

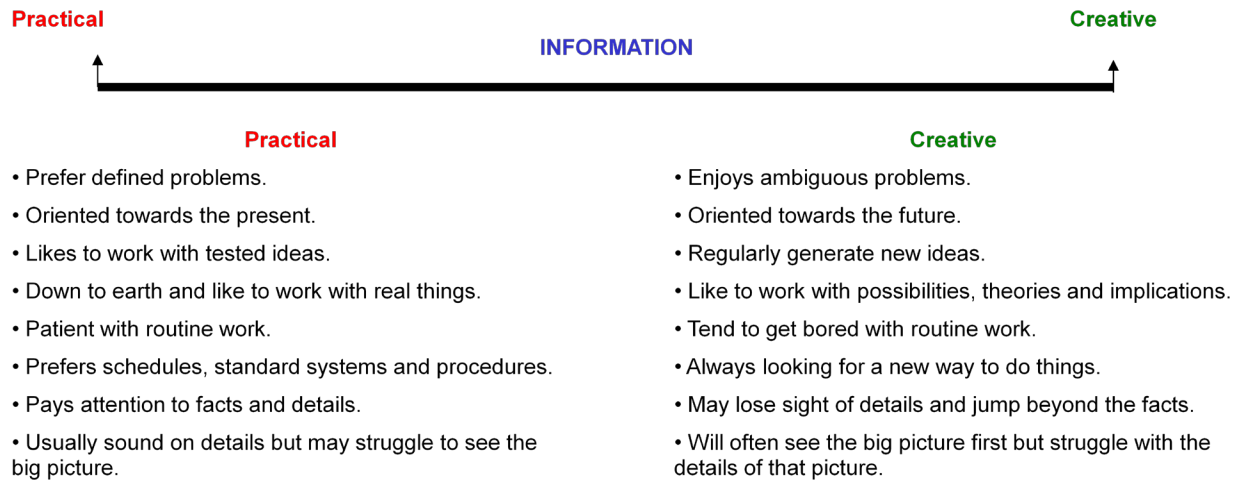
IMPACT OF A VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT

- Talking things through is highly constrained and can create serious frustration and compromise idea generation.
- Meeting others on the team is highly constrained so will often seek other connections outside the team.
- Variety of tasks can be initially constrained as is impromptu activity. There is often no outlet for this
- Stimulation caused by interaction with others is typically constrained. If not addressed within the team this can be sought outside the team.
- Virtual communication does not lend itself to lots of impromptu interactions. An outlet for this is important.
- Impulsive action can be seen as out of alignment with team goals. This type of action can often move along unnoticed much longer in a virtual environment; sometimes with negative consequences.
- Lots of time to think things through and most virtual communication is planned in advance.
- Not impacted as much by not having people around. May find this very stimulating!
- Depth of concentration is enhanced.
- Interruptions can be controlled much easier.
- Communication can be planned effectively.
- May not contribute effectively in virtual meetings unless prepared.
- More time to consider action but may move well down the path of thinking things through before bringing ideas forward.

LEADERSHIP IMPLICATIONS

- **Extroversion is the work preference most negatively impacted by virtual work. Introversion the most positively impacted.** As a leader it is critical to enable virtual communication platforms that have a spontaneous, non work focused component, in addition to the work focused components.
- Reach out to the extroverted preference to provide opportunities for expression.
- Affirm non team connections during normal work time.
- Reach out to the introverted preference to ensure they are sharing their thinking and progress.
- Recognize some people will require more of your time than others and make that visible positively.
- Understand what you need from your own work preference in this area and be transparent about that.
- Encourage 1 to 1 connections with team members to support work requirements
- Get the team together as often as possible if you can!

MEASURES OF WORK PREFERENCE



IMPACT OF A VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT

- Clarity of the work required is critical. If present, work is typically well performed
- Task completion in virtual teams creates trust so a present orientation is valued. Longer term strategy can be a lack of focus
- May need outside stimulation to try something new.
- Immediate problem solving is valued but may not involve others effectively.
- Routines, plans and schedules tend to be critical on virtual teams so support this work preference.
- May check out of virtual interactions that focus on ambiguous problems or things they see as not relevant to the here and now.
- May take ambiguous problems in a direction that is unchecked and potentially unaligned.
- Future orientation is often constrained so may take this outside of the team in frustration
- New ideas can lack a process for expression and implementation.
- May create ideas to offset boredom rather than solve problems!
- New ideas may be criticized with not enough consideration causing lack of engagement.
- Can struggle to provide enough detail to colleagues about their ideas or the support they need to implement them.

LEADERSHIP IMPLICATIONS

- **The Creative work preference (especially the Extroverted and Creative) is negatively impacted by virtual work more than the Practical work preference.** As a leader it is important to ensure enough virtual communication is devoted to the Creative preference; idea generation without immediate critique.
- Communicate more about the vision, purpose, and strategy of the work and make connections to the day to day work.
- Ensure people have time to prepare for virtual interactions that focus on idea generation.
- Where possible, encourage differing work preferences in this area to work together to check each others' thinking as work progresses.
- Check on alignment of understanding of what the meaning of information being shared is before you conclude any virtual interaction.
- Consider how your own preferences may be enabling or constraining the team.

MEASURES OF WORK PREFERENCE

Analytical

DECISION MAKING

Beliefs



Analytical

- Tries to establish objective decision making criteria.
- Measures decisions against payoffs.
- Sometimes seen as detached.
- Will emphasize deciding based on the logic of the given situation.
- Will negotiate on evidence.
- Concerned for fairness based on the rules.
- Likes analysis and clarity.
- Task oriented and will set objectives based on the needs of those tasks.

Beliefs

- Prefer personal, subjective decision making criteria.
- Measures decisions against personal beliefs.
- Sometimes seen as over committed to a point of view.
- Often decide on personal considerations.
- Will negotiate on rights and wrongs of the issues.
- Concern for fairness based on beliefs.
- Likes harmony based on common values.
- Tasks and objectives will emerge from beliefs.

IMPACT OF A VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT

- Objective criteria for decision making is rewarded and efficient.
- Traditional decision making processes are efficient but may become autocratic quite quickly
- Detachment may be enhanced without realization.
- Evidence/data tends to be highly valued.
- Policy, rules and procedures tend to be highly valued.
- A result, rather than the process of reaching that result tends to be rewarded.
- Subjective criteria for decision making are hard to communicate.
- Personal beliefs may go underground or create cliques due to lack of opportunities for expression.
- Can alienate others with personal opinions being stated as facts with little room for exploration.
- May become disengaged quickly if their points of view are not 'heard'.
- May navigate around policy, rules and procedures quietly.
- Can help to provide consistency between a result and the process of achieving that result.

LEADERSHIP IMPLICATIONS

- **The Belief work preference (especially the Introverted and Belief) is negatively impacted by virtual work more than the Analytic work preference.** This is consistent with co-located teams but the Belief preference can be even more neglected in virtual teams.
- Team members, no matter what their preference in this area have lots more time to consider what is important to them, an important focus of the Belief preference. Leaders need to ensure they are making enough time for one on one conversations about what is important to the individual and if/how the team can deliver on that.
- Make sure you are sharing as much information as possible so people can make decisions well.
- Make your thinking and reasoning as visible as possible when you make decisions.
- When important decisions are made, make sure you consider two things: 'What will be the impact on people?' and, 'What support do we need to implement this decision?'

MEASURES OF WORK PREFERENCE



Structured

- Likes clarity and order.
- Concerned with bringing issues to closure.
- Will develop and stick to a plan.
- May rush decisions in the drive for closure.
- Tends to keep to deadlines.
- Reluctant to change once decisions and plans are made.
- Tends to dislike ambiguity.
- Enjoys decision making over diagnosing.

Flexible

- May appear disorganized compared to typical work standards.
- Concerned with gathering information about issues.
- Plans may be altered regularly.
- May delay decisions for more information.
- May see deadlines as irrelevant.
- Open and comfortable with change.
- Tends to tolerate ambiguity well..
- Enjoys diagnosing over decision making.

IMPACT OF A VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT

- Tends to have more control over their environment but role clarity can be an issue.
- Can make decisions in the absence of appropriate input from others
- Tends to like the structure they can apply to a virtual environment
- Can be more efficient due to lack of changes to their working structure
- May seem more reluctant to change
- Can struggle if the work required is not clear or does not fit into their work patterns.
- Can really struggle getting organized and creating their own structure in a virtual environment.
- Can get lost searching for information
- May alter plans and deadlines without adequate communication with others
- Over time can be very effective with the flexible boundaries of virtual work.
- May push for change when the team thinks it is too late
- May benefit from imposed structure as long as they have input

LEADERSHIP IMPLICATIONS

- **The Flexible work preference (especially the Extroverted and Flexible) is negatively impacted by virtual work more than the Structured work preference.** In fact the Structured work preference may be much more efficient in a virtual environment.
- It is often necessary to be more directive as a leader in virtual teams, especially early on. It is important to be transparent about this and talk it through. This directiveness is about clarity, not just telling people what to do. Clarity of roles, deadlines, information is typically negatively affected in virtual environments.
- Do not impose your preference here of working virtually on others. Focus on the results and if there is a problem, then look at solving work structure with the team.
- Ensure enough information is shared so people can make effective decisions on their own.
- Don't constrain the benefits of flexible work if you don't need to!
- Encourage people to set boundaries for their work process and share those with others on the team.