

When behavioral issues and relationships are not understood, the team becomes mired in conflict and the team loses momentum, resulting in lost time and effectiveness. Productivity stealers include:

- Inability to work together towards a common goal
- Fear of sharing ideas
- Fear of negative feedback
- Self interest driving actions
- Expectation that the team leader will solve all of the problems and assume all of the responsibility
- Confusion between individual tasks and relationships with other people
- Lack of appropriate acknowledgement for accomplishments.

It's Not How You Do the Work; It's How You Do the Work *Together*

When a project team aligns its behaviors with its tasks, the time it takes to achieve effectiveness and productivity is dramatically accelerated, improving throughput and decreasing the cost of doing business. When behavioral interference is identified and eliminated, problem solving, decision-making, brainstorming and communication activities become rapid, predictable and permanent.

This concept makes perfect sense intellectually, but it is applied far too infrequently. However, the relationship side of team performance has been given a “bad rap” (in many cases justifiably so) because of its lack of clarity and seeming imprecision. As many of our clients have put it, team development is seen as “singing Kum Ba Yah and holding hands.” One client put it even more bluntly, “We don't have time for that ****. We have work to do.” Apparently, she didn't see the value of behavioral balance—at least not at first.

What is needed is a methodology to manage team behavior with the same precision and integrity as the methodology to manage the technical project management process. So, how do we obtain that balance between the technical side and the human side of project performance—without falling into the “touchy feely” realm?

It's really a balancing act between the ‘operational/functional’ realm and the ‘behavioral’ realm. There is a tendency for a team to prefer one realm over the other. Project teams, for the most part, lean toward the ‘operational/functional’ realm. In contrast, sales teams for example, lean toward the ‘behavioral’ realm. In either case, the team is out of balance. High performing teams are those that are able to maintain the balance. When we watch a tight rope walker, we readily notice that the balance pole is even and centered. If the balance pole starts wobbling or goes too high above either side of the tight rope walker, there's trouble ahead. The same is true for project managers.

Project managers have often said to me that the process side of a project is manageable because it is visible, understandable, and measurable—it is easy to see. The process side is easy to see because they know what it looks like. With today's technology, the relationship side is just as visible and measurable.

In our consulting practice, we have found that most project team members prefer an empirical and analytical approach to understanding the world around them. To match this preference, we use Axiom Software's discUS® suite to analyze team behavior because of its graphic quality, analytical structure, and ease of understanding. The basic DISC behavioral model, the basis for the Axiom suite has been around for 75 years. Traditionally, behavioral instruments like DISC have focused

primarily on the individual. This new technology has enabled us to raise behavioral understanding to a much higher level. We now have the ability to analyze team behavior, model ‘ideal’ teams and analyze behavioral relationships across multiple combinations of people with the same accuracy as individual analysis. This is essential when we have to manage relationships within the team, with team sponsors, with customer contacts, and with other teams. In a team of 10 people, there are 90 individual relationships, and the effective project manager should understand all of them.

By applying this technology in project teams, the teams have been able to generate a number of unique outputs that have improved bottom-line performance.

Teams have:

- Determined how to leverage the team member relationships based on the behavioral preferences of each of the team members.
- Established ongoing behavioral monitoring tools to address the alignment or misalignment of the team leader's leadership style compared to the team's leadership requirements.
- Identified the behavioral issues that will positively or negatively impact the accomplishment of specific upcoming team tasks. Determined ways to minimize or eliminate behavioral interference when it arises within the team work process.
- Assigned accountability for behavioral monitoring as the team completes its work. Created plans to maintain or improve areas of strength and limitation within their team.