

USING PERSONALITY STRENGTHS OF YOUR STAFF TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

As organizations grow and responsibilities expand we all deal with changes in our organizations. The challenges are similar, whether taking over the management of an existing organization, or building one from the ground up. We would all agree that a top management goal is to have harmony on our staffs. We all know that personalities are unique and can clash from time to time. Effective leaders can often avoid those conflicts and crises by knowing what makes each member of your team tick and working those staff personalities to your advantage.

There are many opinions on what constitutes an effective team. I've found that knowing each team member's strengths, what they can best contribute, how to best communicate with them and what NOT to do in dealing with them in their daily work can all be great tools for an effective and productive work environment with greater job satisfaction.

When I arrived at the 12th Man Foundation some 14 years ago, I brought some useful knowledge of working with personality type tools from my former career in banking. The first tool we applied was the Myers Briggs Type Indicator.

While it is far too complex to fully describe in this column, it is a tool that is based on a theory that behaviors are not random, but actually very orderly depending on some basic differences in the way people perceive or judge things. The questionnaire expands to include eight factors that come together into 16 specific models that tie to behavior. No model is better than another, but they do give us clues into the best opportunities to make those personality models jive in the workplace.

Following the sessions where our staff determined their unique personality model, we had open discussion sessions of who fell into each model category and how we could best work together. It was a very eye-opening exercise and led to a working environment where each of us was more aware of the optimal ways to get the most out of ourselves and our co-workers.

About seven years ago, our organization had experienced significant growth, along with the size of our staff, to the point where it was time to revisit the idea of personality mixes. At that point we engaged another perspective through the Insights Team Effectiveness model. While the Myers Briggs tool had eight factors, the Insights model was even more in depth, with 16 personality factors.

Our staff ended up with models on our desk that demonstrated our relative personalities in a small stack of colored blocks. While each team member had some characteristics in each color the dominant color was on top and was a tool to co-workers to remind them of the best ways to interact with that staff member.

For example, Cool Blue represented the more introverted staff members who preferred written communication for clarity and precision while Fire Red represented those who can eagerly execute an idea with no specifics. Earth Green and Sunshine Yellow had their own unique characteristics.

Following this exercise, we did a more formal follow-up and published a page for each staff member by name. The recap included five points in each of four



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categories: 1. Strengths; 2. Brings these things to our team; 3. Strategies for optimal communication with; and 4. Do NOT communicate this way with:

In looking back at my sheet for example, my predominant color was Fire Red and my sheet included these factors in the above categories: 1. Acts quickly and decisively on information, 2. Meets deadlines without exception, 3. Communicates in a manner that is straightforward, fast, efficient and to the point, and 4. Do NOT confuse the conversation with irrelevant details.

In dealing with our graphic designer, his strongest trait was Cool Blue. I had formerly found myself asking him to develop an idea from scratch on a short time frame. Later his personality sheet revealed these characteristics: 1. Disciplined and precise, 2. Encourages clarity in communications, 3. Submit requests in writing and allow him time to consider all the information before acting, and 4. Do NOT ask him to act on abstract concepts. Very quickly I changed, then his performance improved and his job satisfaction went through the roof.

So we ended up with a new twist on an employee handbook — one that focused on how to best deal with our co-workers. I learned quickly that my approach in communication with several staff members needed an overhaul. Is this the magic bullet for total efficiency and office bliss? I will say with confidence that as we all strive for effective and efficient organizations, these models can be good tools to help you along that way.

Now we are getting ready to make a move to the SEC in 2012. This will be a huge step for Texas A&M and for increasing demands on the 12th Man Foundation staff. As I look at the calendar, it's been seven years since the last staff personality review ... probably just the right time to make this a priority for 2012.

There are many tools like these out there. For these specific ones, you can find more information at www.myersbriggs.org or www.insightsworld.com

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NOMINATIONS: FUNDRAISER OF THE YEAR

Every year, NAADD recognizes those who have gone above and beyond in the industry regarding their work at individual institutions.

The NAADD Executive Committee is seeking nominations from the membership for its 2012 Fundraiser of the Year Awards, as well as the new Lifetime Achievement Award, to be presented at the 19th Annual NAADD Convention, June 25-28, 2012 at the Hilton Anatole Hotel in Dallas, Texas.

NAADD members are encouraged to put forward deserving individuals to receive these prestigious awards. Nominations can be made online at www.naadd.com. Please detail the nominee's contributions and the impact they have had on the institution's athletics program goals and student-athlete experience.

Please contact Jason Galaska, NACDA Assistant Executive Director, at 440-788-7470 or via email at jgalaska@nacda.com with any questions you may have.

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