



The I in TEAM: Accelerating Performance of Remote and Co-located Teams

Susan K. Gerke, Linda V. Berens

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Where is the I in Team?

Many say there is no I in Team. We say there is. The I stands for the individual. Teams are made up of individuals who are expected to work together in a way that produces more than they could produce working separately. Individuals bring their talents, goals, role expectations, working habits, and many other characteristics to the team. They don't suddenly become "we." There is always a question of Do I have to give up me to work effectively on this team? Effective teamwork always is a balancing act between independence and interdependence, between the individual and the group. Each individual has core psychological needs, values, and talents that are essential to their well-being and high performance. Each person is unique, yet each has many things in common with others.

The I is at the core of a team and influences the team. The unwritten operating guidelines that develop in the team are greatly influenced by the personality characteristics of the team members. When the majority of the team share some characteristics, the team can fall into groupthink and not be as resourceful and adaptable as it needs to be. If an individual's core needs are not met, core values are not honored, and talents are ignored, that team member will not contribute to the synergy that is possible with teams. Individual differences contribute to increased synergy, but they can also lead to disruptive conflict. Yet most teams jump into doing the assigned work without considering the impact of these individual differences. A lot of diversity on a team creates the potential for much variety in problem solving and for much conflict.

Our experience shows that it's easy to say we want people to work together effectively to achieve the value of great teamwork, but it's not always easy to achieve that great teamwork. High performing teams (both remote and co-located) spend energy on the development of the team rather than just hoping the team members will achieve success together. We have found it helpful to use frameworks for understanding both the individual and the stages of team development.

The topic of teams and teamwork has been explored in many books over the years. Several elements make this book unique:

- The distinctions we make about remote teamwork to help those who work on remote teams (those on which the members are located in different places)
- The connection we make between team development and personality specifically temperament
- The insights you will gain about yourself and others that you can use everywhere in your life
- The practical tips we share that can be immediately applied to your team situation

Our experiences with teams and team leaders have shown us that when they use the information in this book, they greatly accelerate team and individual performance as well as improving team satisfaction and quality of work.

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