

The Team Player

Zeroing In on High Leverage Team Behaviors

Kenneth R. Brousseau, Ph.D.
and
Michael R. Perrault, M.S.

This paper was presented at the 1995 International ASTD Conference, Dallas, Texas

"Be a team player! We want teamwork around here!"

These are familiar words in organizations today. It is a rare organization that is not attempting to create high performing teams. Teaming has become a favored organization form.

Individuals are still expected to contribute, but now as team players. The "old style" of management is a thing of the past. Managers are still expected to get results, but as team leaders, not as autocratic bosses.

In this respect, the present contrasts sharply with the past. One must now be a coach and mentor with one's subordinates and a team player in dealing with one's peers. People who once were rewarded for keeping their noses to the grindstone, now are expected to interact participatively with their co-workers.

For some, these are confusing and anxiety provoking times. Many people are struggling to adjust to the new team-player role. But, in many cases, people have no clear idea just exactly what being a team-player means in terms of actual on the job behavior.

Just what does it mean to be a team player? Time and again, we find people who are sincerely baffled by this question. Often, people have a much clearer idea of what they are not supposed to do as team players, than they do about what they should be doing. They understand the "Thou Shalt Nots", but have only a sketchy idea of what the "Thou Shalts" are.

They realize that it is not the mark of a good team-player to unilaterally make decisions without getting input from others. They know it is bad form to dig in one's heels and argue always for one's favorite point of view. They know that being a team-player means that they shouldn't undercut and insult other team players.

But, things become a lot less clear for most people when it comes to saying just exactly what being a team player *does* mean. Are the Thou Shalts just the flip side of the Thou Shalt Nots? This seems to be what some think. We find people who seem to

think that to be a real team player one must always give in to others when it comes to making decisions. One must wait patiently for a decision to materialize mysteriously from one of the endless meetings that team players must attend. One never pushes for closure.

Moreover, some think, being a team-player means giving up on getting much work done. Team players, they believe, should spend lots of time chatting and socializing with other team-players.

These perceptions of team player "do's and don'ts" make the transition from traditional, hierarchical-authority structures to team-based organizational arrangements difficult. Things can grind to a halt as people grow fearful of making decisions; and quality can suffer, too, when people believe that the over-riding criterion for success in teams is being agreeable and going along with the consensus.

Defining Team Behavior

In our experience, the work of teams covers a broad waterfront. Teams must solve problems, develop plans, coordinate activities, manage relationships, and administer communications among team members. How much the work of a particular team falls into each of these varied categories depends of course on the task environment that the team faces. Teams that must respond rapidly to quickly changing situations will need to emphasize coordination and communication. Those responsible for overseeing the activities of other teams will need to emphasize planning, problem solving and relationship management.

More Than Participation

Although discussions of teamwork often focus on the interpersonal side of behavior, it seems clear that most teams must engage in intellectual activity as well as interpersonal activity. Cooperation and participation are required in teams, but participative and cooperative behaviors alone are not sufficient to assure that one will be viewed as a good team player. In varying degrees, all teams need people who are good generators of ideas, adept at interpreting data, skilled in organizing activities, and diligent in monitoring performance and meeting schedule commitments. It is entirely possible for a person to be viewed as very cooperative and sincere, but as hopelessly inept in making things happen and in keeping things on track.

In a very real sense, the consummate team player is an individual who is talented in the areas that always have been important e.g., solving problems, meeting commitments, keeping up productivity and who can do these things effectively in the context of a highly interactive team environment.

TeamView/360

In response to the growing demand to develop high performance teams, we have developed a measurement tool to efficiently assess the full scope of team behavior. This assessment tool forms the basis for an interactive WindowsTM- based software system called TeamView/360TM. TeamView/360 comprises a peer assessment system, or what has become known generically as a 360 degree evaluation system (see

appendix to view a paper on the system's psychometric properties). When using TeamView/360, team members evaluate themselves and their teammates individually on 31 behaviors.

The 31 behaviors, randomly distributed on the questionnaire, are grouped for reporting purposes in the seven categories shown in Table 1.

Problem-Solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generating new ideas Recognizing trends Evaluating and acting on new ideas
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning for the future Adapting to change
Controlling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizing and orchestrating events Monitoring and controlling performance Meeting schedules and deadlines Producing high quality work Maintaining high productivity Meeting commitments
Self-Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Handling pressure Coping with own frustration Developing own capabilities Responding to feedback
Managing Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiating relationships Cooperating with others Sizing-up people Maintaining relationships Resolving conflicts Responding to others' needs
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delegating responsibility Facilitating meetings Motivating and inspiring others Developing other people Giving recognition to others
Communicating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Articulating ideas and information Listening to others Keeping other people informed Giving performance feedback Communicating expectations

TeamView/360 serves two purposes: to provide feedback to team members that allows them to compare their self perceptions with their effectiveness as team-players in the eyes of their teammates. In addition, aggregated ratings for teams show where the team collectively perceives its strengths and weaknesses to lie.

Figure 1 shows a sample TeamView screen showing an individual's self ratings, ratings by other teammates, and aggregated peer ratings for all teammates. The results are normalized against the TeamView ratings of a standard population of just over 800 individuals.

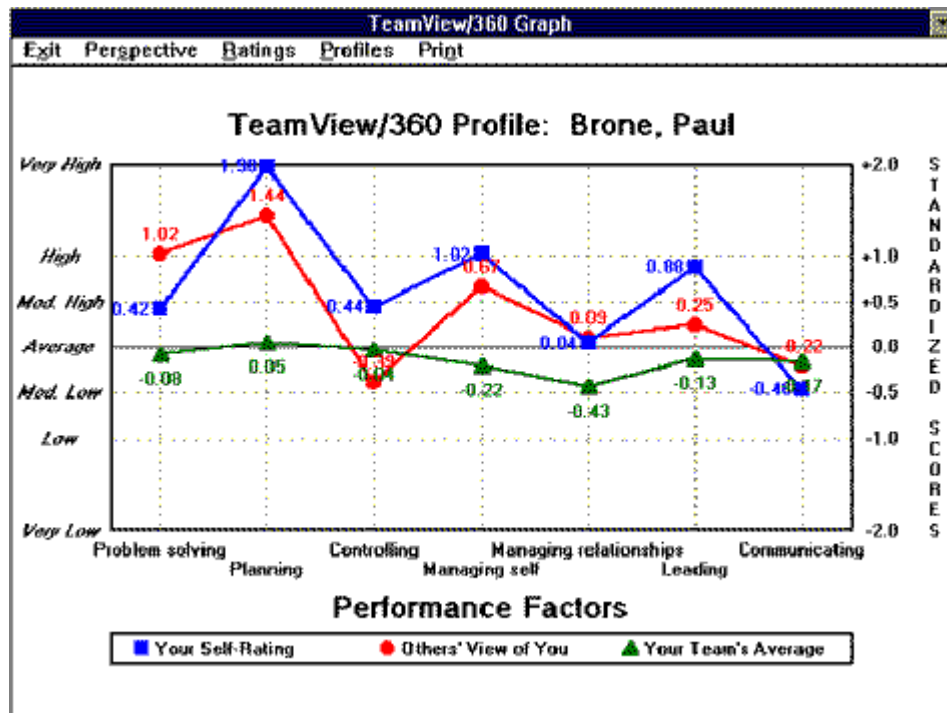


Figure 1

Looking at the lineup of behavior categories in Figure 1, we see the more intellectual behaviors (typically associated with the left brain) on the left, and the more interpersonal behavior categories (right brain) on the right, pivoting around the self management category in the middle of the screen.

Additional screens show the same ratings (i.e., self, other, team average) on the specific behaviors that form each category.

Statistical studies of TeamView ratings indicate that factor analyses support the construct validity of TeamView behaviors and that the scales have very acceptable interrater reliability (averaging .74), attesting to the validity of the system for assessing how effectively individuals are perceived by teammates to perform as team-players (Brousseau, 1994).

Our experience shows that TeamView feedback is a powerful medium for building awareness of and insights into one's own image as a team player.

Developing Team Skills: Where to Begin?

In working with TeamView/360 as a team development tool, we see many types of profiles. Some individuals are rated by teammates as highly effective across the board. Others are rated as highly effective in some categories and as needing significant improvement in others. And, of course, some individuals are rated as needing improvement across the full spectrum of TeamView behaviors.

These latter individuals are of particular concern in a world where teamwork is rapidly becoming the norm. Often, we find in this group, people who have been highly regarded and highly rewarded in the past as individual contributors or as, no nonsense, results oriented managers. Now, the world has shifted on these people, leaving them confused, ridden with anxiety, and as perceived by others as troublesome obstacles to true teamwork. Many in this group are heading swiftly in the direction of career derailment and personal upheaval.

To forestall and avoid failure and crisis, and then to develop effective team skills, where does a person in this category begin? We often find these people utterly daunted and overwhelmed by the challenge of developing team skills. To change everything, all at once, about one's behavior is viewed as an impossible task and rightly so. To present individuals with this challenge would be foolhardy and extremely counterproductive.

Identifying High Leverage Team Behaviors

To assist people with poor overall Team-View/360 profiles who, if left on their own, seem destined to derail, we have endeavored to identify specific "high leverage" skills on which to concentrate their developmental efforts. More specifically, we set out to determine which behaviors have the greatest impact on one's image as a team player.

In our minds' eye, we imagined team behaviors as forming a network of interrelated behaviors. The metaphor we had in mind was that of a fisherman's net, where each joint in the net, representing a particular behavior, is joined directly to closely allied behaviors (other joints), and indirectly to the full scope of team behaviors. Consequently, proceeding with this metaphor, one can imagine that a change in any one behavior will bring about changes, some great, some small, in other behaviors in the net.

Our quest was to determine which behaviors are most central in this net, such that if, figuratively, one were to reach into the net and pull up on a particular node representing a particular behavior, one would maximally raise up the other nodes other team behaviors along with it.

Research Method

To attack this problem, we turned to our data- base of TeamView ratings, which has grown quite large and which comprises a quite diverse population of individuals employed in varied jobs in a wide array of organizations and industries from computers to banking, pharmaceuticals to merchant shipping, manufacturing to

consulting services. In all, the data base contains over 8000 completed TeamView/360 ratings of some 850 people. Most of the individuals in this database are employed in professional and managerial positions. About one third of this sample is female.

In examining TeamView/360 profiles, we often see that individuals who are rated high in the intellectual categories on the left in Figure 1 are rated low on the interpersonal behaviors on the right side of the screen. Likewise, it is not unusual to find individuals who are rated quite highly on the right side, interpersonal categories, but relatively low on the left side, intellectual categories.

This right side, left side differential slope has caused us to suspect that, although the TeamView behaviors do cluster in several varied categories as indicated by factor analytic studies, the behaviors fundamentally fall into two broad categories: intellectual behaviors and interpersonal behaviors.

To test this hypothesis we forced an orthogonal, two factor solution on the ratings in our TeamView database. The two factor solution did indeed identify an intellectual and an interpersonal cluster as we anticipated. In examining the factor solution, we were interested in determining within each cluster or factor which behaviors were most closely connected to the other behaviors in the cluster. To do this, we simply identified the behaviors with the highest factor loadings (or correlations) with each factor. Table 2 shows the top three line up for each factor.

Table 2 Top Three Behaviors in Each of Two Factors (Based on two-factor solution factor loadings)	
Intellectual Factor	Interpersonal Factor
Planning for the future	Listening
Generating new ideas	Cooperating
Evaluating and acting on new ideas	Maintaining relationships

Profiling the Consummate TeamPlayer

We believe that the behaviors shown in Table 2 offer insights into the behavioral skills that are most likely to lead one's teammates' to see one as a value added team member. According to these results, the consummate team player is a person who excels both as a listener and as a planner.

The indications are that planning and listening are fundamentally important functions that contribute to team success. The results indicate further that people who plan well are also seen as skilled in generating new ideas and in evaluating and acting on new ideas. People who listen well are considered also to be cooperative and as good at maintaining relationships with other team members.

Inasmuch as the two factors in Table 2 were derived from an orthogonal factor

solution, we can assume that being a good listener does not guarantee that one is a good planner; nor does being a good planner guarantee that one is a good listener. These may represent fundamentally different skill sets. To be viewed as effective across the board, one must be skilled in both areas.

Apparently the team player who garners the highest regard from teammates is one who listens carefully to other teammates' views and concerns and then develops plans that incorporate those views and concerns. In other words, the consummate team player listens actively and then acts on what he or she has heard.

Style Factors Contributing to Listening and Planning Skills

These results seem simple and straightforward. However, any additional information that can be brought to bear on the identified pivotal team skills should be useful to those who are struggling to improve their performance in the eyes of teammates.

To probe further into the dynamics of planning and listening skills, and to paint a more complete portrait of team players who are viewed as possessing these skills, we turned once again to our TeamView/360 data base. This time we examined a smaller sample drawn from the database on whom we also had information from other assessments in addition to TeamView/360.

In particular, we looked at a sample of 312 individuals who had been assessed with the Decision Dynamics Decision Style assessment series (Driver, Brousseau, and Hunsaker, 1993). These assessment tools are designed to assess habits of decision making that people develop through both socialization and work experience.

Table 3 Decision Style Model				
		Information Use		
		Minimal to Moderate Information Use	Maximizing Information Use	
FOCUS	Uni-Focus	Decisive Efficient Bottom-line oriented Candid Terse Loyal	Hierarchic Serious Analytic Methodical Quality-oriented Logical Visionary	Systemic Serious Contemplative Complex Global thinker Multiple high priorities
	Multi-Focus	Flexible Adaptable Intuitive Sociable Agreeable Changeable Humorous	Integrative Analytic Exploratory Creative Tolerant Diverse interests	

Adapted from Driver, M.J., Brousseau, K.R. & Hunsaker, P.L. *The Dynamic Decision Maker*. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco: 1993.

The Dynamic Decision Style model defines five fundamentally different styles of decision making based on:

Information use: the amount of information that a person is generally inclined to use as a matter of habit when making decisions.

Solution focus: a person's propensity to develop uni-focused solutions or decisions (i.e., decisions that are clearly defined and stable or fixed) vs. multi-focused solutions or decisions (i.e., decisions that possess multiple and changeable parts).

The basic style model and behaviors characteristic of each of the five styles are shown in Table 3.

Dynamic Decision Style assessments produce scores on each style which indicate the estimated frequency with which an individual uses that style. Based on these scores, the assessment identifies a primary style (style used most frequently) and a secondary style (style used next most frequently). The assessment series includes two instruments: the *Driver Decision Style Exercise* and the *Driver Streufert Complexity Index*. In our examination, we concentrate principally on *Driver Decision Style Exercise* assessment scores, through which we measure one's operating style or natural decision style.

To identify styles most closely associated with the two clusters of TeamView/360 factors, we computed two indices from TeamView scores. One consisted of each individual's mean score on both planning for the future and generating ideas. The other consisted of each individual's mean score on both listening and cooperating. These two computed indices should indicate how effective an individual is perceived to be on each of the two pivotal team skill sets.

Our next step was to contrast the decision style profiles of:

The 50 individuals (of the 312) with the highest scores on the listening/cooperating factor with the 50 individuals with the lowest scores on this factor.

The 50 individuals with the highest scores on the planning/generating new ideas factor with the 50 individuals with the lowest scores on this factor.

Listening/Cooperating Decision Style Profile

T-tests comparing the means of the highest and lowest 50 individuals on the listening-cooperating factor showed statistically significant ($p < .05$, one tailed) higher scores on the Integrative operating style for the top scoring group. Interestingly, however, analyses of primary styles did not show that the high and low listening/cooperating groups differed significantly in the frequencies of their primary operating styles. In other words, simply having a primary Integrative operating style does not necessarily lead to a good TeamView/360 score on the listening/cooperating factor.

Examination of our results indicates that individuals with primary decision styles other than integrative have just as good a shot at being seen as effective listeners and cooperators as do persons whose primary styles are Integrative. Apparently, more

important than one's primary style is the absolute level of Integrativeness in one's profile. That is, a person can have a primary style quite different from Integrative, such as the action-oriented, fast moving Decisive style, and be seen as a good listener *as long as that person is able to shift into the Integrative style situationally.*

We consider this to be an important finding. Individuals do not need to be uniform in their decision style profiles to be effective at listening/cooperating. The only requirement is that the Integrative style be represented in an individual's overall repertoire of styles. We now have solid evidence that good listeners and cooperators do not need to be carbon copies of each other.

Why might the Integrative style be needed in one's style profile? We believe this is because the Integrative style seeks information; therefore, when using the Integrative style, people are naturally inclined to listen for useful information when others speak. Moreover, the Integrative style, as a multi-focused style, values different points of view. Therefore, when in the Integrative mode, one is likely to react positively to teammates' ideas, even when those ideas differ from one's own. This particularly seems likely to account for the association between the Integrative style and TeamView/360 scores on cooperation.

Planning/Idea Generating Decision Style Profile

T-tests comparing the means of the highest and lowest 50 individuals on the planning/generating new ideas factor showed marginally significant ($p < .05$, two tailed) higher scores on both the Hierarchic operating style and on the Integrative operating style for the top scoring group. A composite score of both Hierarchic and Integrative style scores showed a clearly statistically significant ($p < .05$, one tailed) difference when contrasting the high planning/generating new ideas group with the low group.

Here again, however, individual's primary decision styles did not clearly differentiate the high and low scoring groups on planning and idea generation. A slight difference did show up in favor of having a primary Hierarchic style, but the differences were not significant statistically.

The indications are that, as was the case with listening and cooperating, it is not so important which style a person uses primarily as long as one has the capacity to shift situationally into the Hierarchic and Integrative styles.

These results seem reasonable and provide clues indicating why some individuals are seen as effective in planning for the future and in generating new ideas. Both, the Hierarchic style and the Integrative style, are information maximizing styles. Both, tend to look at the big picture when making decisions.

The Hierarchic style eventually narrows decisions down to a clear cut course of action and has been found in other studies to be associated with the development of clear, long range courses of action. The Hierarchic style also is expected to use plans actively to guide work activities once the plans have been put in place. Moreover, Individuals whose style profiles include sizeable amounts of the Hierarchic style

generally are seen by others as confident, committed, and well-organized -- qualities that in reasonable quantities could inspire confidence in other team-mates.

The Integrative style is more open and exploratory, and has been associated in other studies with creativity (see Driver, Brousseau, and Hunsaker, 1993) and this seems to account for the association with TeamView/360 scores on generating new ideas. Accordingly, to be considered an effective planner and generator of ideas, our results indicate that one needs to have both of these information maximizing styles in one's style repertoire.

Zeroing-In on High Leverage Team Skills Development Strategies

We believe that our findings offer important clues about the ways in which people can most profitably direct their efforts to develop team skills. Most notably, the findings are *positive* in the sense that they indicate what individuals *should* do if they wish to be team-players, instead of focusing on what individuals should not do. They clearly suggest pivotal Thou Shalts for team-players.

That listening should show up on the inter-personal side as the most central behavior, influencing how individuals are viewed by team-mates, makes a good deal of sense. Most people seem to find it extremely satisfying to see that other people are interested in what they have to say and have actually made the effort to listen to and understand them. Openly listening is an acknowledgment of the value of another person.

Although it may be possible to listen well, but nonetheless to not cooperate, it is highly unlikely that one could cooperate without listening. After all, one must actually know what others want in order to cooperate with their wishes.

Together, listening and cooperating skills appear to make a powerful combination of allied talents that help to hold a team together and give it a sense of cohesion. Of the two, listening seems to be the more straight-forward skill. Much has been written about active-listening, and one can attend courses and workshops on this particular topic.

Our findings also give insights about the underlying personal styles and habits that support effective listening. The Integrative style is one that values information and exploration. When operating in the Integrative style, people are most inclined to feel the itch of general curiosity that in turn will lead them to pay attention to and actively consider what others have to say. If someone says something surprising or something that conflicts with one's own view, Integrative curiosity will naturally lead one to explore further and deeper another person's thinking in order to understand better the person's point of view.

In fact, when in Integrative mode, people are likely to be attracted to diverse and conflicting viewpoints, and are unlikely to summarily reject others' ideas or to focus their attention on defending a particular position. Nor will they simply drop one idea in favor of another. Rather, they are most likely to try combining or building on different ideas to create a new idea.

This style link to effective listening is an important one. From our work, we know that people can modify and develop their styles. So, efforts to develop an Integrative component to one's styles should broadly result in improvements in how team-mates view an individual as a team-mate, not just as a listener, but more broadly across the spectrum of interpersonal behaviors.

In working with people to develop team-player skills, we have found that simply gaining insights into one's own styles has a broadly beneficial result. People often see for the first time how their image in other peoples' eyes is being shaped by their own behavioral tendencies, rather than merely being the outcome of situational circumstances and others' flawed perceptions. This often provides the "big picture" that people need to better develop and manage their behavioral skills.

Learning to move into the Integrative style, as situations warrant, can help an individual make the transition from being seen as a hard-core, hold-out for the old ways to being a competent and valued team-mate.

On the intellectual side of the team-player picture, we see that the Integrative style pays some dividends here also. But, in this case, it isn't alone. The allied, information maximizing, but more focused and methodical style, Hierarchic, also contributes to one's image as a planner and generator of ideas. The key seems to be information use. Both the Integrative and the Hierarchic styles are inclined to think things through and to consider long-range issues. Consequently, their plans are likely to take into account numerous considerations and to have value as short-run and long-run guides for individual and team efforts.

Most likely, the Integrative style supports the initial idea generation and exploratory stage of planning, while the Hierarchic style comes into play during the formulation of specific goals and implementation plans.

Here again, these styles can be developed and used consciously, by team players who not only want to perform well interpersonally, but also intellectually. Once people gain insights into their own styles, they can begin to see how they may need periodically to absorb more information than they might naturally be inclined to do, and to spend a bit more time than usual considering what implications the information has regarding future objectives and strategies.

The Well-Balanced, High Performing Team Player.

As we mentioned earlier, we often find that people who are rated highly by team-mates on the right-side, interpersonal behaviors frequently are rated lower on the left-side, intellectual behaviors, and people who are rated high on the left often are rated low on the right. Our findings indicate clearly how individuals can balance their profiles at a high level.

Listening and planning are not necessarily linked or related, but they easily can be. At the most basic level, all one has to do is to listen actively and carefully to what others have to say and, then, to make a special point of incorporating others' ideas into one's plans. This would link listening and planning in a powerful way - one that is virtually

guaranteed to boost one's image and one's objective performance as a team player.

We feel optimistic that team-skills development strategies aimed at facilitating individuals' listening and planning skills and at linking the two skill sets will prove to yield high returns in team development. People need not be left in the dark about what it means to be an effective team player, nor need they be left with a dis-torted and lopsided picture of a good team-player. There clearly are some sharply defined Thou Shalts: listen actively and actively incorporate what you have heard into your plans.

References

Brousseau, K.R. [TeamView/360™ and the Individual Behavior Questionnaire: Psychometric Properties](#). Agoura Hills, CA: Advanced TeamWare Publishing, Inc. 1994.

Driver, M.J., Brousseau, K.R., and Hunsaker, P.L. *The Dynamic Decision Maker*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass Publishers, 1993.