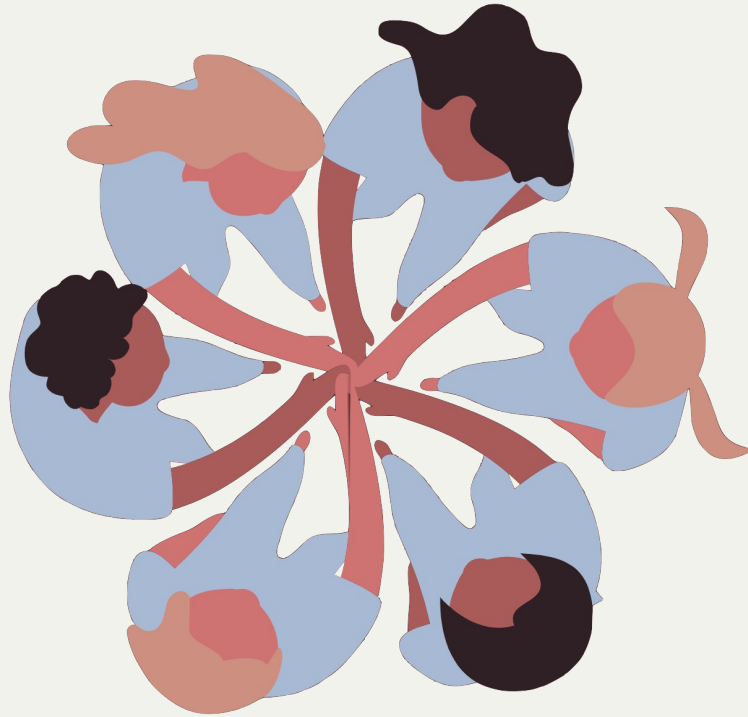


12 SCIENCE BASED WORKSHOPS ON

# Team Flow & Mindset Change



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# About the author

Hi there, I am Christian Heidemeyer, Psychologist and Scrum Master.

My personal mission is to bring valid psychological research into practice. I want this research to be used to help people in their daily lives rather than collecting dust in university libraries.

This is why I founded the psychology app Psytastic and co-founded the “digital coach” Echometer.

I wrote my master thesis on the relationship between “quality of leadership” and “turnover intention” of employees. Fascinating stuff.

During the research for that project and my current job at Echometer, I discovered and used quite a few psychological theories and models. Theories and models other practitioners can profit from immensely!

So, here is my attempt to communicate my findings in a digestible and applicable way: After explaining the models, I also suggest workshops to actually bring that knowledge into your team.

I hope to help you reach a new level of team and company culture. A culture of drive, performance and happiness.

Have fun reading!

Greetings from Münster (Germany) and #keepGrowing,  
Christian

P.s.: If you do not have much time to read, the next chapter is there to guide you.

# Busy? This will guide you

Here is an overview of what you can achieve with the different team workshops in this eBook and under which circumstances I would recommend them.

Workshop	Duration (7 persons)	Min. & max. number of persons	Team phase ( <u>Tuckman,</u> <u>1965</u> )	Goals
"Flow" on a team level - the model				Understand the basic model for team flow
1: 200% better performance	90 minutes	3 - 15	Storming to Performing	Increase effective communication, engagement
2: Unconscious potentials	90 minutes	3 - 15	All	Increase engagement & satisfaction, decrease number of conflicts & stress level
3: So important and so obvious	90 minutes	3 - 20	Forming to Performing	Increase effective communication & satisfaction, decrease stress level
4: The Johari window	30 - 210 minutes	3 - 10	Norming to Performing	Increase trust & satisfaction, decrease number of conflicts
5: Conflict competence	150 minutes	6 - 100	All	Increase trust, decrease number of conflicts
6: Happiness	10 minutes	3 - 100	All	Increase happiness & trust
7: Mindset is overrated 1	50 minutes	3 - 100	All	Increase empathy, decrease number of conflicts
8: Mindset is overrated 2	100 minutes	3 - 15	Storming to Performing	Increase engagement, decrease stress level

<b>Workshop</b>	<b>Duration (7 persons)</b>	<b>Min. &amp; max. number of persons</b>	<b>Team phase (<u>Tuckman,</u> <u>1965</u>)</b>	<b>Goals</b>
9: <i>The Model for personality</i>	150 minutes	3 - 10	Storming to Performing	Increase trust, empathy & engagement, decrease number of conflicts
10: Working on Mindset itself	90 minutes	3 - 100	All	Increase learning, culture of failure, performance
11: Intrinsic motivation	60 minutes	4 - 20	Storming to Performing	Increase engagement & trust
12: <i>Sustainable</i> team development	60 minutes	3 - 20	All	Sustainably increase engagement, innovation & loyalty

# Introduction: F\*\*\* storytelling



Have you heard of the “Five dysfunctions of a team”? Or the DiSC model of personality? Maybe “Project Aristotle” from Google which raised massive attention on “psychological safety” in the workplace?

If you have not heard of them: Perfect, that’s not necessary, and I will not explain them here.

If you have heard of them: Shame on you! Okay, I am joking. It is not your fault.

These are three examples of what I would call “wrongfully popular psychology” in the world of practitioners.

They are “overrated”. They are “too popular”, given their *scientific base* and *generalizability*.

For the “five dysfunctions of a team” and the “DiSC model”, there is not a single valid study evaluating if they are actually accurate and fit reality.

In case of “psychological safety” we do have an amazing study. An amazing study, but with sampling bias. Do you really think that the sample in that study - employees of Google, probably the most attractive employer there is - is representative? I do not think so.

And still, some people act like the results of that study are valid for every single company and psychological safety is the one and only thing to focus on when developing teams. Undoubtedly, psychological safety is important. But as I will show in this eBook, it is not *that* important and does not deserve the attention it gets.

So why are these three examples of “psychology known to practitioners” so popular? Because of storytelling. They were presented to the world through well told stories.

Storytelling in itself is not a bad thing. But when abusing storytelling to convey a wrong message, that is a problem.

I believe there are better models out there. Models that will really help developing people and teams. Every kind of team.

Models that consider the scientific gold standard: Validity, reliability and objectivity.

These are the kind of models I will explain to you in this eBook.

# “Flow” on a team level - the model

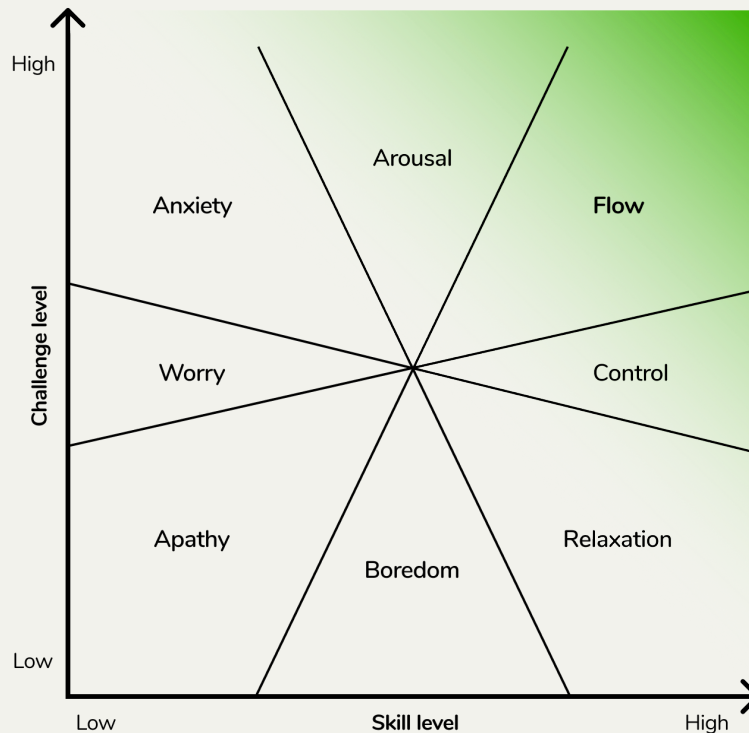


Ever been in a “flow”? The feeling that nothing can stop you and that your skills are perfectly designed to cut through the challenge? Researchers have made this terminology and psychological state relatively popular in recent years.

But what exactly is flow? It is the feeling when you are doing something you are especially good at. For example, when you are dancing the Tango like you were born to do it, skiing down a mountain in a trance or easily fixing problems on your computer - and forgetting about everything around you.

In other words: Flow is when your skill level and the difficulty of a task are in perfect balance (see graphic; [Csíkszentmihályi, 1998](#)).





The status of flow is what many people are looking for in their hobbies. And it is what many managers would love to have their employees get into every day.

To put it in a nutshell, everybody loves flow. Why not help people achieve it? Or even better: Why not help *teams* achieve *team flow*?

Good News: In recent years, the dutch researcher Jeff van den Hout was working on a holistic model which is supposed to help teams reach the flow status.

The following eBook is meant to help guide you through the conditions necessary to thrive in greatness - thus, the preconditions of team flow.

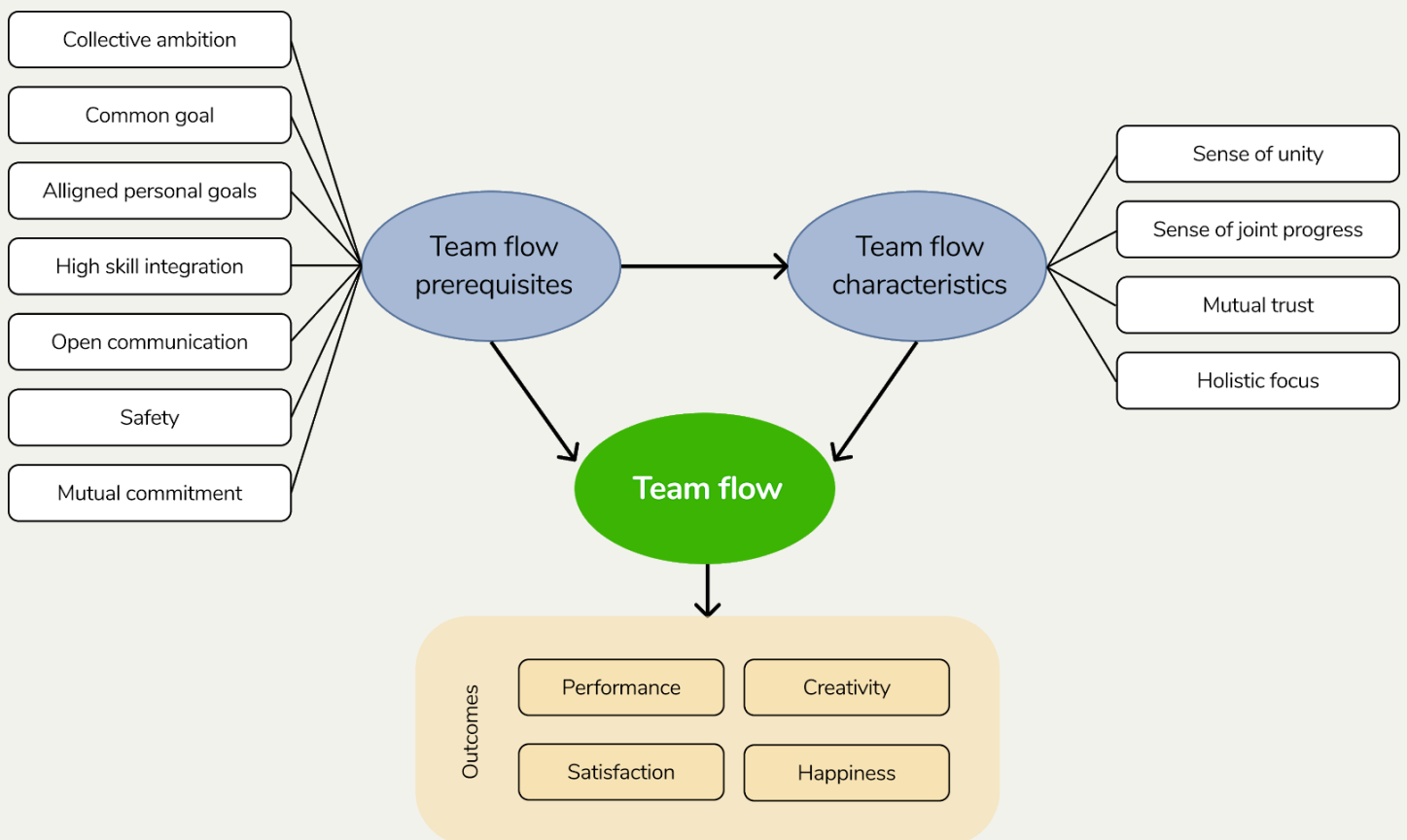
## Prerequisites of flow

Where do we start? It is simple: With the team flow model (see next graphic; [van den Hout, Gevers, Davis & Weggeman, 2019, p. 7](#)). It gives you the seven prerequisites (left) needed to get

into team flow. The four team flow characteristics are (I guess commonly known) signs or characteristics that your team is in the flow mode (right).

Let me be clear: This is not a model somebody made up (like the “5 Dysfunctions of a team”; more on that in workshop 9 or [this](#) (german) video of me).

This is a scientifically validated - you could say “data driven” - theoretical model of how to let your team reach new highs ([van den Hout, Gevers, Davis & Weggeman, 2019](#)).



Reach new highs? What I mean by that are the positively correlated outputs of team flow.

With an increased chance for “Team Flow” experience, you also have an increased chance for higher team performance, creativity, happiness and more positive outcomes - which is scientifically proven.

## Creating team flow - the short version

In the following, I will explain the process of creating the 7 prerequisites of team flow. The rest of the eBook will give you specific, deeper theories and workshops to practically implement all this scientific gold.

### Workshops focusing on team flow

The book “Team Flow - The psychology of optimal collaboration” (2019) by the researchers van den Hout and Orin Davis describes these steps in great detail. I will give a brief summary of their findings below, as well as how this eBook will help you accomplish these steps (highlighted in red).

Firstly, a team has to identify the underlying motivations, shared values and strengths that unite the members into a team. The team then has to formulate a collective ambition based on those commonalities.

Now, the team has to take that collective ambition and align it with a concrete common goal. A goal that is both challenging and achievable within a reasonable timeframe (Van den Hout & Davis, 2019, p. 94).

1. To help you do exactly that, the first workshop of this eBook is about shared mental models.
2. The second workshop goes even deeper and explains the importance of team norms when collaborating to achieve goals as a team.

In the next phase of reaching team flow, every member of the team sets a personal goal that is aligned to the common one. This personal goal should provide the team member with meaning, growth opportunities and intrinsic motivation. Sounds so easy, right? More on the latter in Chapter 3.

Team members derive their personal tasks, roles and responsibilities from the team and personal goals. If the team members can play their respective unique strengths in working towards the goals, bundling their strengths into a unified force - you can speak of “high skill integration”. That is what you have to aim for.

During the process of coming closer to a goal, it is also important for all team members to always be making progress together (Van den Hout & Davis, 2019, p. 95).

That creates a feeling of togetherness. An easy way support that feeling of togetherness is to always emphasize how every single conducted task and role is important for the overall outcome of the team. A workshop will help you go deeper here:

3. The third workshop will help you enforce role clarity - an easy and undervalued way to make team work easier.

The team is getting closer to the flow momentum. Now, it is about optimizing mutual feedback on processes and outcomes so that everyone knows how they are doing and how the team as a whole is doing (open communication).

You have to create an environment in which team members feel safe to act by eliminating unacceptable risks and supporting each other with positive and encouraging feedback (safety; Van den Hout & Davis, 2019, p. 95).

Yep, this is the moment where “psychological safety” plays a role in the play called “team flow”. But - as you can see - it is not the leading character.

4. To help you foster a culture of safety and honest feedback, the next workshop focuses on personal blind spots of team members. Before coaching and supporting others and to foster feedback culture itself, it is important to get to know oneself. This works best through the lens of others.

Theoretically, now six of the seven prerequisites for team flow are in place. The team can now start to actively work towards its common goal.

Hence, it is about holding each other accountable for maintaining the requisite dedication and vigor for achieving personal goals and keeping each other on track by coaching each other on the tasks (constructive feedback) and working to maintain the prerequisites of team flow (mutual commitment; Van den Hout & Davis, 2019, p. 96).

This is the moment where conflict culture becomes paramount. Everybody should know the basics of conflict competence and how to improve it.

5. Workshop five will help you improve the conflict competence of your team.

The prerequisites are established. You now have to allow team members to function autonomously and share experiences of unity, trust, focus and progress that may transcend into experiences like team flow.

The team can evaluate, reflect and enjoy the experience of team flow and agree to pursue new, challenging team goals (Van den Hout & Davis, 2019, p. 96).

6. There is one easy method to create (life, team or individual) happiness. Workshop six will explain to you what to do to support an ongoing stream of team flow experiences.

That was the process and model in short. The eBook is finished. That was easy!

But what if... your team is still not motivated after all of this? Chances are, that is the case.

How could that be? Do you have a guess? Our instincts often tell us, the root of all inefficiency is about one person. Or about the wrong mindset of that person.

## Workshops focusing on mindset

This is the reason I added a few workshops that help to work on your team from a different angle. From the angle of mindset.

7. Mindset is important. But not as important as many people think. Workshop seven will help you and your team understand why people often overrate the importance of "mindset". Ha!

After doing so, I will give you a specific method to work on mindset in a rather counterintuitive way.

8. Workshop nine will help you design the tasks of your team members so that the right mindset arises automatically.

Okay, now it is time to talk about the things you would expect when writing about mindset.

9. Workshop nine explains *the* model for personality from scientific perspective and helps you take advantage of it.

Finally, there is one workshop that is solely about mindset itself on an individual level.

10. Workshop ten will give you a specific method used to foster the growth mindset of your team members.

## Two holistic models and workshops

One of the most important and valid mechanisms used to learn something deeply is... repetition. Repeat something very often, and chances are high that you will actually remember it.

Therefore, in the eleventh workshop, I will explain to you the number one theory of how to foster intrinsic motivation. The good news is, this theory will actually just repeat many things you have already learned from earlier workshops and theories.

11. Workshop eleven will give you and your team the “fastlane checklist” to ultimately examine which factors are missing for the perfectly motivating job.

After all of that, what could come next?

Well, imagine if there was one way to combine the know-how of all these theories and workshops. All the scientifically proven psychology on team and organizational growth. I can tell you: There is.

12. The last workshop explains how exactly a tool called Echometer uses psychology to nudge your team into continuous learning, thriving and satisfaction.

# Chapter 1: Theory & workshops

## focusing on team flow

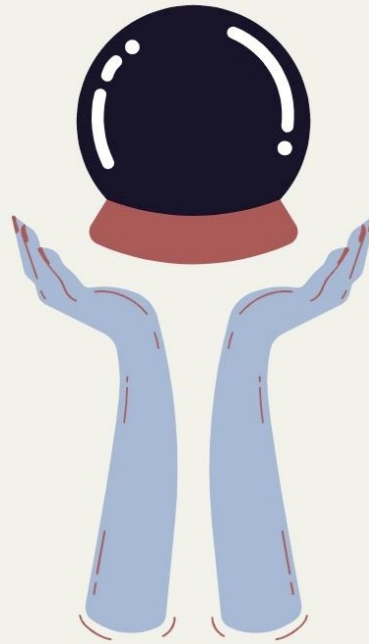
If you skipped the "F\*\*\* storytelling"-chapter, I can't blame you - it's a weird name, I'll admit that. But I suggest you go back and read it, because it will orient you through the rest of this book

Anyway, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, the first workshops will help you maximize the likelihood of team flow experiences.

Van den Hout and Davis ([2019](#)) write that, for team flow experiences, you need a collective ambition as a team. A good collective ambition is based on the shared values, underlying motivations and strengths that unite the members into a team.

The important word here is “unite”. Often, a team becomes a team when they share something. When they have a shared mental model of things. This is where the first workshop comes in.

# Workshop 1: 200% better performance - mental models



The first workshop helps your team identify and visualize a shared mentality - This is a combination of their shared values and strengths. In other words, how teamwork for the group is supposed to look. What values do we share? How can we use these shared values to enhance teamwork?

Let's begin with a little storytelling (because, as I told you, it works).

## The psychology behind it

Lieutenant John Kelly was required to maintain a high level of focus. He was the leader of a team of 5 U.S. Navy lieutenants who had only one task: to determine as quickly as possible whether surrounding warships were peaceful or hostile.

Time was running out - but Lt. Kelly was relaxed. He had learned something in a two-hour training before, and this method led to his team achieving an excellent result.



Lieutenant Kelly was part of a scientific experiment, and because of this training his team scored 4.57 points out of 5 possible points. The control group with no training only got 2.17 points!

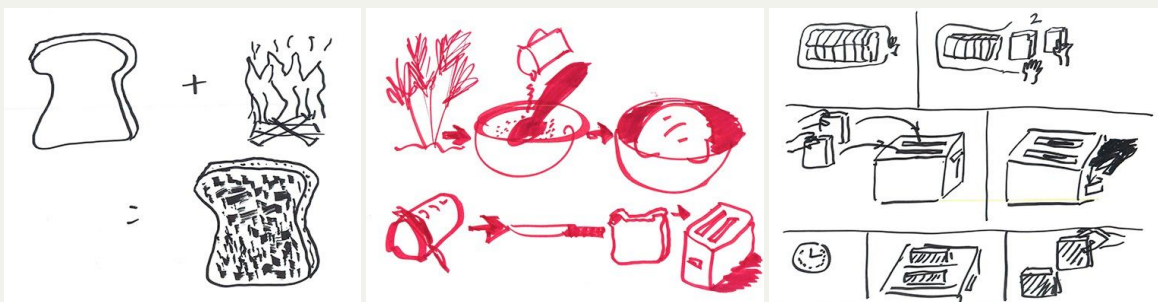
The better performance of his team can be attributed to a different kind of retrospective (also known as “lessons learned workshop” or “team debrief”) Lieutenant Kelly conducts this with his team regularly. His type of retrospective (vs. the type of retrospective used by the control group) led to a much better learning experience with his team afterwards. Which led to a better performance in that experiment (Smith-Jentsch, Cannon-Bowers, Tannenbaum & Salas, 2008).

So what is the secret sauce of his retrospective approach? In short: A shared mental model of the team.

### Mental models

What is a mental model? The theory behind it, based on findings from the cognitive sciences, social psychology and anthropology is as follows: People perceive reality or external stimuli, through internal, cognitive "mental models" (also called "frames" or schemes"; Lee, Johnson, Lee, O'Connor & Khalil, 2004).

We have a mental model for everything - from "how to behave in a Chinese restaurant" to "what makes good project management" to "how to make toast".



Tom Wujec, author of 4 bestsellers on creative thinking and design tools, often starts his trainings with an explanation of what mental models are. For this he asks the participants to draw “how to make toast”. This creates many different results such as the following - three people with completely different mental models (see [drawtoast gallery](#)):

The illustrations show individual variations in mental examples of “how to make toast” (more examples and the Ted Talk about it can be found at [www.drawtoast.com](http://www.drawtoast.com)).

The clue: Teamwork works better when:

- the team’s mental model accurately fits *reality* and

- the team members have similar mental models to each other regarding successful teamwork (Mathieu, Heffner, Goodwin, Cannon-Bowers & Salas, 2005).

This exact insight can be used to improve the success of retrospectives or lessons learned workshops massively.

So, what can we learn from this? First: If you are not conducting regular retrospectives, start doing so.

A meta-study has shown that the use of retrospectives lead teams to an increased performance of 20 to 25% even though teams on average only invest 18 minutes when conducting retrospectives. (Tannenbaum & Cerasoli, 2013).

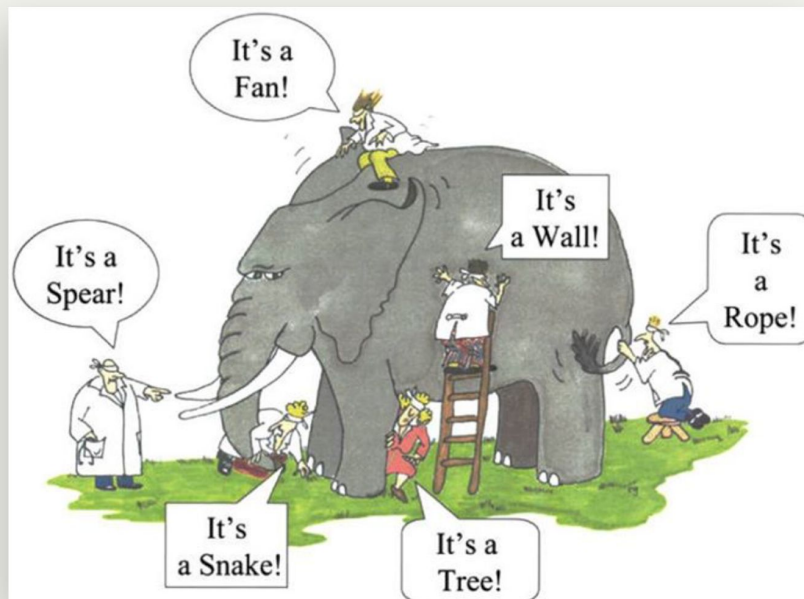
Next, you better learn how to conduct the right kind of retrospectives - taking mental models into account. The following method will help you do so.

## Instructions for the workshop

1. Start with the "Draw Toast" exercise (see Ted-Talk): Tell your team members without extensive instructions that everyone should draw "how to make toast" from their point of view. They have 2 to 3 minutes to do this.
2. Let everyone present their drawing. Discuss the similarities and differences of your versions of the mental model. Has anyone painted people? A hand? Does everyone have a toaster? Did someone draw additional products?
3. Now continue to moderate by explaining to the team on this basis what mental models are. For example, some people immediately think of hands when they think of "making toast", engineers may think of the technology behind it.  
For this step, watch the entire Ted video if necessary.
4. Explain to the team that a shared mental model of things like "successful teamwork, shared values or motivation" can make teamwork much easier. But the mental model should reflect reality as much as possible (Mathieu, Heffner, Goodwin, Cannon-Bowers & Salas, 2005).

In order to develop a mental model that is as accurate as possible, every perspective counts. At the moment, everyone probably has a different view on this.

To make it easier to understand this, you can show the following graphic (from the [patheos website](https://www.patheos.com)), which shows how 6 blind scientists would describe an elephant, depending on their perspective. Equivalently, everyone in the team has a different perspective on your teamwork - and no one is wrong.



Everybody hopefully understands the importance of shared mental models now. In the next step, you can go in different directions. You have to decide what shared understandings you want to promote within your team: The mental models about your company's values? About the underlying motivations - to examine which are the common ones? Or about your strengths as a team?

As an example, let us take the strengths.

5. Ask that everyone writes down or draws their mental model of the team's strengths (given that you already know each other as a team). But make them write each single part on different slips of paper.
6. Now the team has time to arrange the slips of paper into a model or a meaningful structure - everybody pins it onto a flipchart and similar points are arranged together. According to the Ted Talk, this sometimes works just as well or even more efficiently *if there is no talking during that process.*

Peter M. Senge, who is probably mainly responsible for the introduction of the term "learning organization", expresses this important step in [this video](#) on the topic of "Systems Thinking":

*"If I am not prepared to question my own mental models, then I can forget about discovering hidden potential. You have to bring together different people, from different angles, who see different parts of the system, and together see something that none of them can see individually."*

7. When it becomes apparent that the team has finished the task (or after a given time frame), everyone can sit down again and talk about the experience. Here, the following questions can support a reflection-promoting moderation:
  - a. Which part of the mental model was to be expected? E.g., which strengths did you know before?
  - b. Which part of the mental model surprised you? E.g., which strengths are maybe new for you?
  - c. How did it feel to develop the mental model silently?
  - d. Do your current values or team goal(s) (given that you already have a shared mental model of these) fit your strengths (or the like)?
  - e. Which parts of your strengths do you use most often?
  - f. How could you make better use of your strengths to reach your goals?
8. After this reflection, a model should be agreed upon and a conclusion should be reached about your strengths as a team. As a team is a living organism, these strengths can change - but still, the model should lay a ground for future conversations about the topic.

### **The first step to team flow**

To create team flow, one of the first steps is to create a collective ambition based on the shared values, strengths and underlying motivations of your team. Based on the insights you obtained from this workshop, I recommend forming a collective goal or - if you already have one - at least to challenge the status quo of the current one.

## Workshop 2: The unconscious secret to better performance - team norms



### The psychology behind it

I already explained it earlier, but for the “chapter-skippers” among you...

Have you heard of project aristotle from Google?

The goal of “Project aristotle” was to answer the following question: What is the secret of successful teams? For two years, Google pursued this question and examined which factors characterise the most effective teams. It's not the combined intelligence of the team members or the longest work experience.

Something else was the most important factor, by far: Psychological safety ([Duhigg, 2016](#)).

Psychological safety is the common conviction of all members of a team that it is safe (within the team) to take interpersonal risks ([Edmonson, 2014](#)).

Thus, psychological safety is the one and only most important construct ever, right?

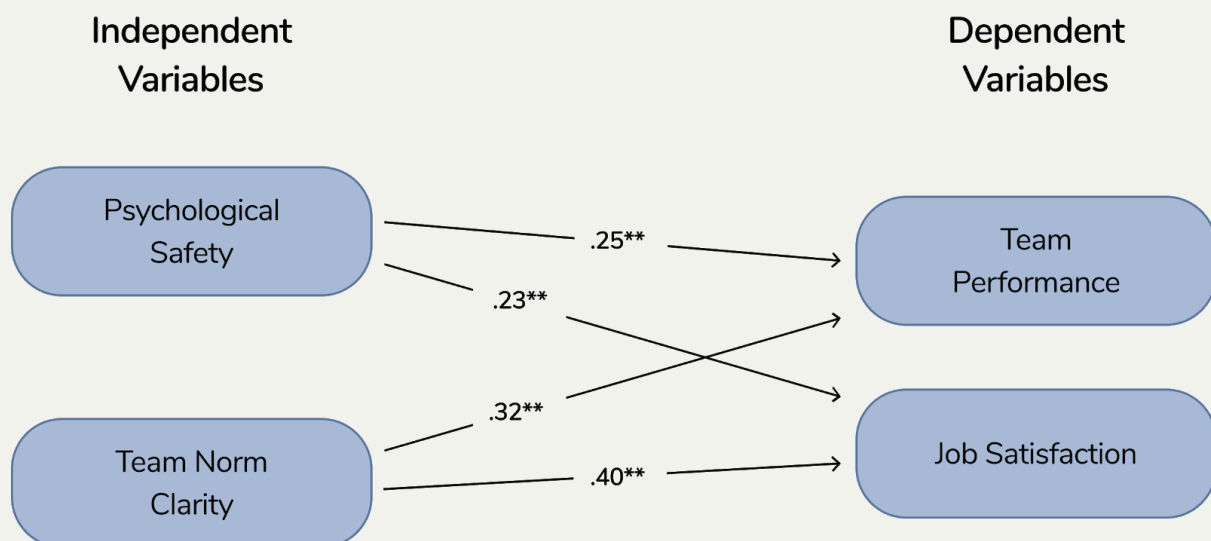
Of course not. Ever heard of “sample bias”? The study was conducted within the Google company. So it probably is valid and applicable for Google internally, and definitely other companies can learn from it, but this can still differ from company culture to company culture.

### Psychological safety is overrated

I would like to draw attention to a different study - indicating a conflicting finding.

The study researched 38 software development teams (Lenberg & Feldt, 2018) working for five different organizations (I know, still not representative - but at least 5 different company cultures).

Basically, they were researching what is the more important precondition in software teams for team performance and job satisfaction: psychological safety or... team norm clarity (more on that later)?



To put it simple, higher numbers in the upper graphic indicate a relatively higher influence on the outputs “performance” and “satisfaction”. Which means that... team norm clarity clearly is more important than psychological safety, according to that study.

Wow! Why is everyone talking about psychological safety, if there apparently are more important psychological constructs - based on “more representative” studies? Because of f\*\*\* storytelling (see introduction). Anyway, let us focus on team norms then!

Firstly, what the heck do they mean by team norm clarity?

## What are team norms

Behavior in groups is guided by - often unconscious - behavior patterns that are relatively stable and expected by group members: team norms.

For example, a team norm may be that you are supposed to arrive punctual to meetings. Or that the team assumes that you should not work on weekends - or that you should answer e-mails even at 10:00 at night.

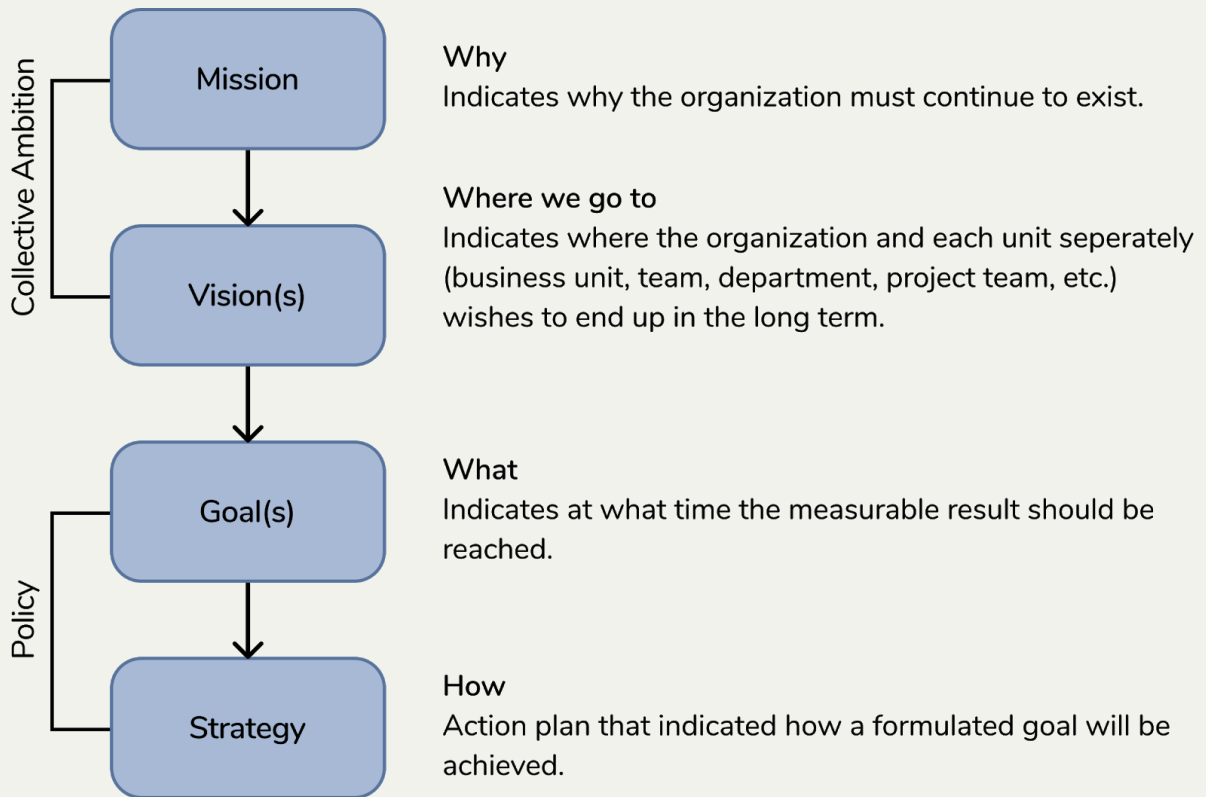
Scientifically, team norm clarity is measured through these three simple sentences (or items) in a questionnaire ([Lenberg & Feldt, 2018](#)):

- Standards for member behavior in this team are vague and unclear. (Reversed)
- It is clear what is, and what is not, acceptable member behavior in this team.
- Members of this team agree about how members are expected to behave.

Norms are typically formed early in the lifespan of a team ([Ng & Van Dyne, 2005](#)) and serve to increase the predictability of a group member's behavior and help the group avoid embarrassing interpersonal problems ([Feldman, 1984](#)).

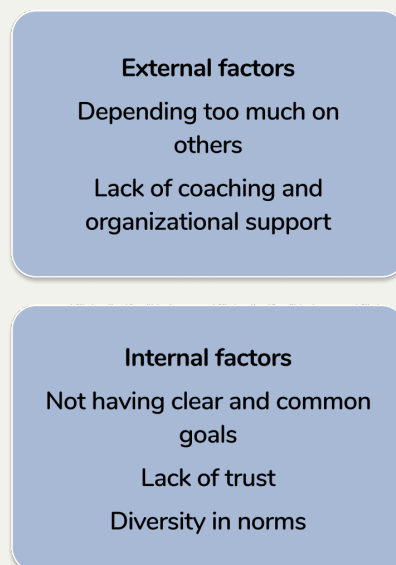
The clue: An explicit specification of such core team norms reduces the amount of energy team members put on discussing acceptable behavior and enhances team performance ([Lenberg & Feldt, 2018](#)) and, apparently, individual satisfaction.

As side information, just so you know: Norms are not only found on a team level, they are equally important on an organizational level. The architecture of norms in an organization is based on categories you probably already know ([Van den Hout & Davis, 2019; p. 89](#)):



Team norms are influenced by all of these cultural factors. But let us come back to team norms.

I would like to underline their importance even more: A different study within autonomous agile teams researched the biggest barriers of these kinds of teams and found out there are five main hurdles, divided in external and internal factors (Stray, Moe & Hoda, 2018):





As you can see in the graphic, the researchers differentiate between external (2 barriers) and internal barriers (3 barriers). This eBook focuses on what you can do on a team level. With that in mind we will focus on internal barriers.

First, there are two all time classic barriers: Team goals and trust. Much has been written on them, so instead I will focus on the last one.

We have a rather unintuitive one: Diversity in norms - again!

Researchers Teh, Baniassad, van Rooy and Boughton (2012) have a definite and data driven suggestion about team norms:

**“Look more at norms than at individual team members’ personality types or intelligence.” (p. 57)**

So, you better work on your team norms. Research suggests that “norm manipulation” is a practical way to enhance team performance (Teh, Baniassad, van Rooy and Boughton, 2012). Let’s manipulate some norms!

Well. “Manipulate” is a strong word. Let’s say “develop”.

## Instructions for the workshop

Given the psychological background, it is easy: A great team knows its team norms. A great team shapes its team norms. And a common way to do that - is to establish specific team rules for behavior.

The good thing about this is that clear guidelines of how to behave also help to foster trust - which is great because “lack of trust” is the second barrier in the aforementioned study.

To establish team rules, I recommend the following steps. When conducting them, the whole team has to be present:

1. After setting the stage with an engaging check-in, explain to the team what norms are and why they are so important.

You could do that by letting the team guess which of the following variables is the more important precondition of team performance and satisfaction (according to a study within 5 different companies): Psychological safety or team norms?

Before the next step - brainstorming a list of guidelines - I would like to emphasize something. Group norms are not only about “What you should not do”. They are also about “what you should do” as well as what you “strive for and would love to do and be”. Group norms could also be ideals.

You have to draw attention to this before conducting the next step with your team. You have to make them analyse your task: What does it require to reach our team goal? Our collective ambition? Does it require efficiency and speed (e.g., build the fastest pizza delivery service), or does it need creativity and freedom (e.g., develop the new technology device everybody wants)?

Emphasize that the key is to have the right norm for the right task at the right time (Teh Baniassad, van Rooy and Boughton, 2012).

2. After emphasizing that, ask the team openly to brainstorm a list of guidelines that will help create an effective team for the given task. Everybody should brainstorm on their own to decrease the possibility of groupthink. Furthermore, everybody should generate as many ideas as possible, because one of the easiest ways to have great ideas... is to have many.

The person with the most ideas wins something (a massage, a voucher for something, a snickers, whatever).

3. Now, every team member shares every single idea and the facilitator records them on a flipchart or whiteboard.

You could also let the team write their ideas directly on sticky notes explaining them as they go along.

*Note: If your team is bigger than eight people, you could think about forming pairs of two and letting them discuss their ideas for max. 5 minutes before one of the two shares it with the whole group. In this case, emphasize that every single idea should be mentioned.*

4. Cross off redundant ideas or give them a headline. Form groups of similar norms. Try to focus attention on the most important areas of interaction.

Ideally, you will end up with three to six areas where the norms apply. For every area, you should have roughly two to six specific behavioral norms. (From my experience, less is more, as it will make it easier to remember and apply to everyday life).

For example, you could have the areas “how to behave in conflicts” and “meeting culture”.

*Note: If you have too many ideas, you could add a dot-voting in this step: Everybody has 5*

*votes and chooses which ones are the most important ones by sticking (or simply drawing them) on a flipchart.*

5. The next step is undervalued, but very important: Each member of the group commits to living these guidelines. Ideally, at the end of the workshop you will have a poster with the results as well as some extra space left.

In that space, you write "I commit to living these norms and to tell others if I believe that a group member is violating them. I agree to be upfront and specific with the involved party and not to complain behind their back about it."

Everyone signs this document in a preferably official manner. This will help raise team member commitment to abide by the now defined norms. "This wasn't just for fun. This is our bible now."

6. After the workshop, the team norms should be visible - put the poster in your office where everyone can see them and into your digital workspaces like Slack or Jira.
7. The team norms are not written in stone. They are written on paper. Even metaphorically. They are always open to discuss. Regularly, you should talk about them. For example, retrospectives could be a great space for doing so.

We have clear guidelines now of how to behave. And the commitment to follow them. This will massively help to focus our resources on the most important things.

It also should help us reach our collective ambition. Let us go a step further.

## Workshop 3: Obvious & important but hard to achieve - role clarity



### The psychology behind it

Everybody would agree that “communication” is key for a successful team. Communication is like oil for an engine - without it, things heat up quickly and sooner or later stop in a more or less explosive way.

But why is communication so important? I want to focus on one key message here: Because it helps to create *role clarity*.

During my time at the University of Münster, Germany, I conducted a study researching how *quality of leadership* influences *turnover intention* of employees.

I developed a theoretical model of which mechanisms and behaviors of leaders trigger a potential shift of an employee’s intention to quit their job.

To sum it up, my hypothesis was that leadership quality has an influence on employee job satisfaction and “commitment to the company”. If satisfaction and commitment to the company is low, turnover intention is higher.

But what are the specific mechanisms and behaviors a leader triggers which influence an employees satisfaction and commitment? I proposed three things:

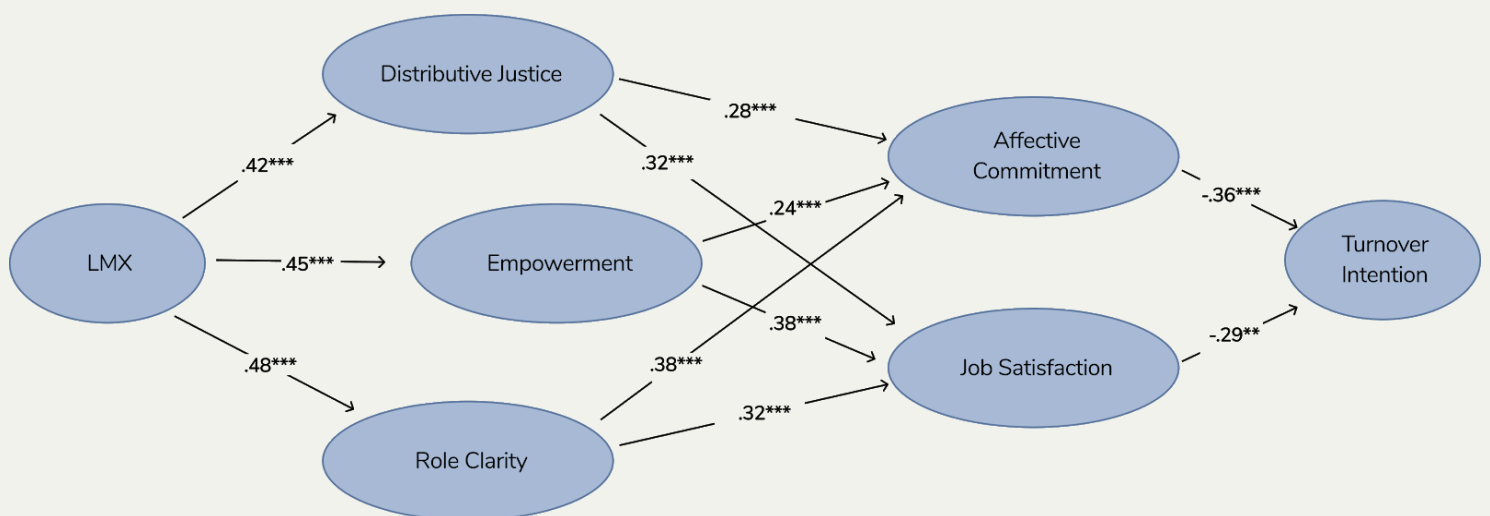
1. The leader is an upstanding individual who has earned the respect of their employees. Employees in turn feel they are treated fairly.
2. The leader empowers the employee making them feel responsible, e.g. by assigning them power to make decisions.
3. The leader clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of the employee, so that minimal stress arises e.g. due to unspecified working instructions.

Obviously, all three are important behaviors. But what do you think - which of the three is the most important one to minimize turnover intention?

I tested the model statistically in my study, cooperating with three companies (n = 118). The study obviously is not representative. But it still has an important message.

Below, you can see the results in a simplified way.

Again, higher numbers indicate a higher relationship. More stars indicate a higher statistical significance.



Interestingly, the most important one of the three is role clarity.

Firstly, the leader has a particular influence on the role clarity of the employee, a bigger one than on their subjective decisional power and sense of being treated fairly.

Secondly, overall, perceived role clarity has the greatest influence on the satisfaction and commitment to the company of that employee.

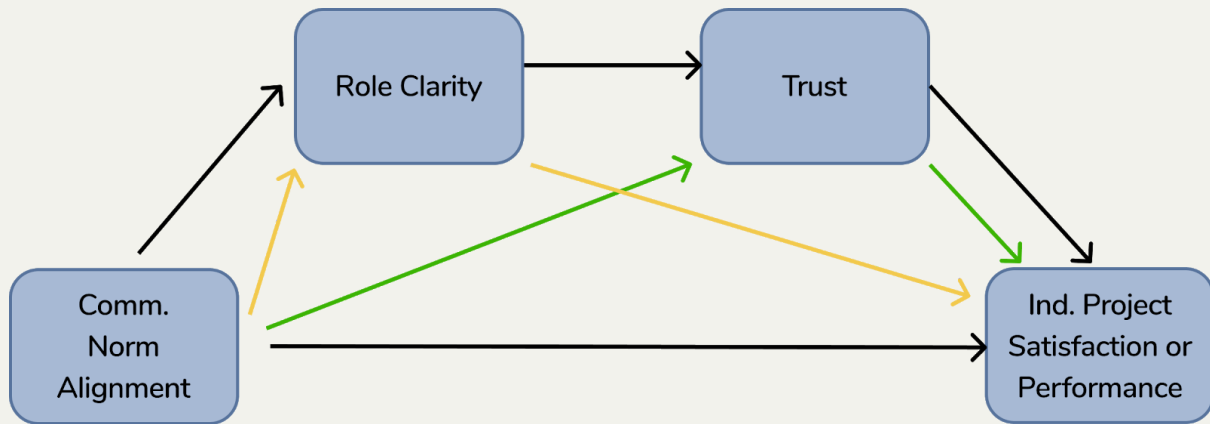
So in short, what can we learn from this? For an employee and for a team member, it is massively important to perceive role clarity. The following sentences or items (from a questionnaire measuring role clarity) may help you understand what exactly that means (Henderson, Stackman & Lindekilde, 2016):

- I feel certain about how much authority I have.
- There are clear, planned goals and objectives for my job.
- I know that I have divided my time properly.
- I know what my responsibilities are.
- I know exactly what is expected of me.
- Explanation is clear of what has to be done.

A different study came to a similar conclusion, though from a different angle: Communication norms (Henderson, Stackman & Lindekilde, 2016).

Communication norms are the basis for role clarity. It may be a norm in your team to meet for “Dailys” where you talk about how your current tasks - at that moment - add value to the team goal. That will help clear your role responsibility.

The study investigated the relationship between communication norms and project team performance and satisfaction. It came to the conclusion that those communication norms have an influence on the latter especially through fostering role clarity of team members (see graphic, with “Communicative Norm Alignment” on the left; Henderson, Stackman & Lindekilde, 2016).



Team norms increase performance. After reading workshop 3... that should sound very familiar. In this case, specifically communication norms foster role clarity, and role clarity fosters trust.

Which one is the new important variable I am introducing here? Role clarity! I like that very much, because it is so easy to work on role clarity! Let us do so - here is the workshop.

## Instructions for the workshop

The following five steps are based on the “Role Analysis Technique”, in short “RAT”

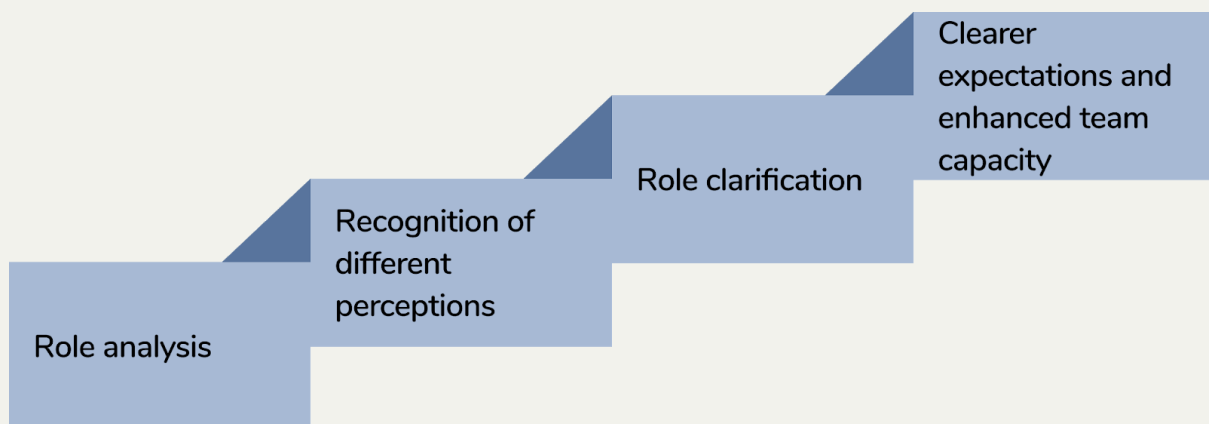
(Schermerhorn, Osborn, Uhl-Bien, and Hunt, 2012):

1. Each team member thinks about their own role and writes down how they perceive it. Five to ten minutes should be enough.  
As a guideline or structure to do so, you could give the team members instructions to reflect on: “Your role in completing our task. Your role as a team member”; or more generally, “Your role in reaching our goal.”
2. Each Team member writes down their perceived expectations of each of their fellow team members.
3. Now, the team discusses each individual’s roles, focusing on where expectations match and differ. Go through the team member by member, giving everyone the chance to speak.  
You could also draw a matrix for this with all the team member’s names in there, if the team is not too big. Then you will have a complete overview of roles and expectations.
4. Now it is time to reach consensus regarding the roles and responsibilities of each team member. In the step before, every person was discussed. To keep it short and simple

from now on, each employee should write down their own role for themselves,(now hopefully clear to them).

5. To see if their views match the expectation, everyone presents their results to the whole group and final suggestions are made.
6. A profile should be created for each role analyzed. Just like the team norms, it is a living organism and open for regular reflection. But it should serve as a great start and guideline for the coming teamwork.

The following graphic illustrates this process ([Carter et al., 2005](#), p.130).



The implementation of this role analysis exercise should result in role clarification that improves the efficiency of your team massively - depending on how clear your roles have been before.

Did you notice something in this workshop? This exercise also helps your team create a shared mental model of how roles and tasks are distributed! The power of shared mental models - again. Everything is interconnected.

Let us focus on a different level now - the individual team member.



## Workshop 4: Chasing Blind Spots - the Johari Window



### The psychology behind it

90% of people think they are above average at driving their car ([Svenson, 1981](#)). 90% of professors think they are above average researchers ([Cross, 1977](#)).

Do you hear me? 90%! That is crazy. It seems as though we are not that self aware - or as if we have many blind spots.

At the same time, it makes sense that the more self awareness you have of your strengths, weaknesses and trigger points - - the better you can work on a team.

A [paper from 2010](#) reviewing the theoretical and empirical literature on self-other rating agreement (SOA) from more than ten years of research also emphasizes this: Leaders who perceive themselves as effective - compliant with the perception of their subordinates - are more likely to be linked to positive individual and organizational outcomes.

The same probably applies for every member of your team. So, how do you get to know yourself better?

## Instructions for the workshop

The psychologists Joseph Luft and Harrington Ingham ([1955](#)) developed a nice method to foster self reflection and to help uncover unknowns when it comes to self-awareness.

Here is what they suggest ([based on this explanation](#)):

1. Everybody in your team gets the following list of adjectives.

able	dependable	independent	modest	responsive	tense
adaptable	dignified	ingenious	nervous	searching	trustworthy
bold	empathetic	intelligent	observant	self-assertive	warm
brave	energetic	introverted	organized	self-conscious	wise
calm	extroverted	kind	patient	sensible	witty
caring	friendly	knowledgeable	powerful	sentimental	
cheerful	giving	logical	proud	shy	
clever	happy	loving	quiet	silly	
complex	helpful	mature	reflective	spontaneous	
confident	idealistic	religious	relaxed	sympathetic	

2. You now focus on one person in the group. Everybody in the team picks four words that they feel best describe that person. At the same time, the person does this for themselves.
3. Next, I recommend having your group come up with real examples that prove these words fit the person.

*Note: In some versions of this workshop, it recommends picking six words. From my*

*experience, examples enrich the discussion massively. And it is easier to find four examples than six. Therefore, I suggest using only the four most important words.*

- Now, you work as a group. The adjectives are inserted into the following matrix which could be on a whiteboard, flipchart or digital screen.

The person you are focusing on has to start, as they set the basis of what is “known to self”. They can make hypotheses about which of their adjectives is not known to others (the “Hidden” array) and test if those hypotheses are correct within the next step.

*Note: Opening up to your team can have a nice side effect psychologists call “norm of reciprocity” - an easy mechanism to get to know people fast. It is simple and works: If you open up to others and they feel like you invested something into them, they will follow. Thus, if you are really honest when talking about yourself, this feels like a present for the rest of the team. And if you receive a present, you want to give back - through being honest and open yourself. Applied in the right manner, this effect could boost trust in your team.*

	Known to Self	Not Known to Self
Known to Others	Arena	Blind Spot
Not Known to Others	Facade	Unknown

What do the different arrays mean? It is probably pretty obvious:

**Arena**

Adjectives or characteristics that both the person and at least one member of the team perceive.

### **Blind Spot**

Adjectives or characteristics that are not selected or perceived by the person but are chosen by at least one member of the team.

### **Facade**

Adjectives or characteristics selected or perceived by the person but no member of the team. Either, the team members are unaware of this or it is just a subjective truth of the person.

### **Unknown**

Adjectives that no one perceives. This array represents behaviors and motives that nobody recognizes, the collective unknown - either because they do not become salient or are collectively ignored.

5. In this last step, the rest of the team adds their three adjectives (or more) to the matrix. If somebody is describing something that person did not mention, add it into the “blind spot” field. If somebody mentions something which was in the “hidden” field before, change the status of that perception into the “open field”.
6. After everybody shares their perception, the results are open to discuss and the person you have been focused on can ask questions. The aim of this step is to question the results to make them more precise.
7. The last part of the discussion is about forming “action items”: Which of the adjectives may be hidden strengths or weaknesses? Where does the biggest potential of this new self awareness lay? Are there possibilities - within your task as a team - to take into account the possibly new discovered strengths, weaknesses or needs?

This process is repeated for every member of the team (10 - 30 minutes). Depending on how many team members you have - if you do not want to spend the whole morning on the workshop -, you could also focus on a different team member every two weeks (e.g., within or as the last part of your retrospective).

If you are planning to do this in one workshop session and you have different styles of sticky notes and a big enough whiteboard, you could possibly use one board for the whole team.

By the way, you can also do this workshop in a similar manner remotely on [this](#) website.

## **Where to go next**

The target of this workshop is to better understand how you are perceived by your teammates. And to get to know yourself more precisely.

Furthermore, to talk about such personal issues will help foster trust in your team and is one step further on the ladder to a working feedback culture.

Going back to the team flow model of Van den Hout, I suppose that the first six of the seven prerequisites for team flow are now in place. Now, it is getting more important to hold each other accountable on team norms and focusing on achieving the team goal.

This is where potential conflicts may arise. And conflict competence becomes important.

## Workshop 5: Solving conflicts



### The psychology behind it

Numerous studies confirm that a typical manager has to spend 20 percent of his or her time on managing conflicts (e.g., [Watson and Hoffman, 1996](#)).

Accordingly, the costs of conflict are high. There are even websites that help organisations measure the monetary cost of conflict (e.g., [this one](#)). This is one more reason to work on your conflict culture (besides the uncomfortable situations conflicts create).

### **A misconception about conflict**

First, I would like to stress that conflict is not always bad. Psychology differentiates between cognitive or “task conflict” and relationship or “affective conflict” ([Amason, 1996](#)).

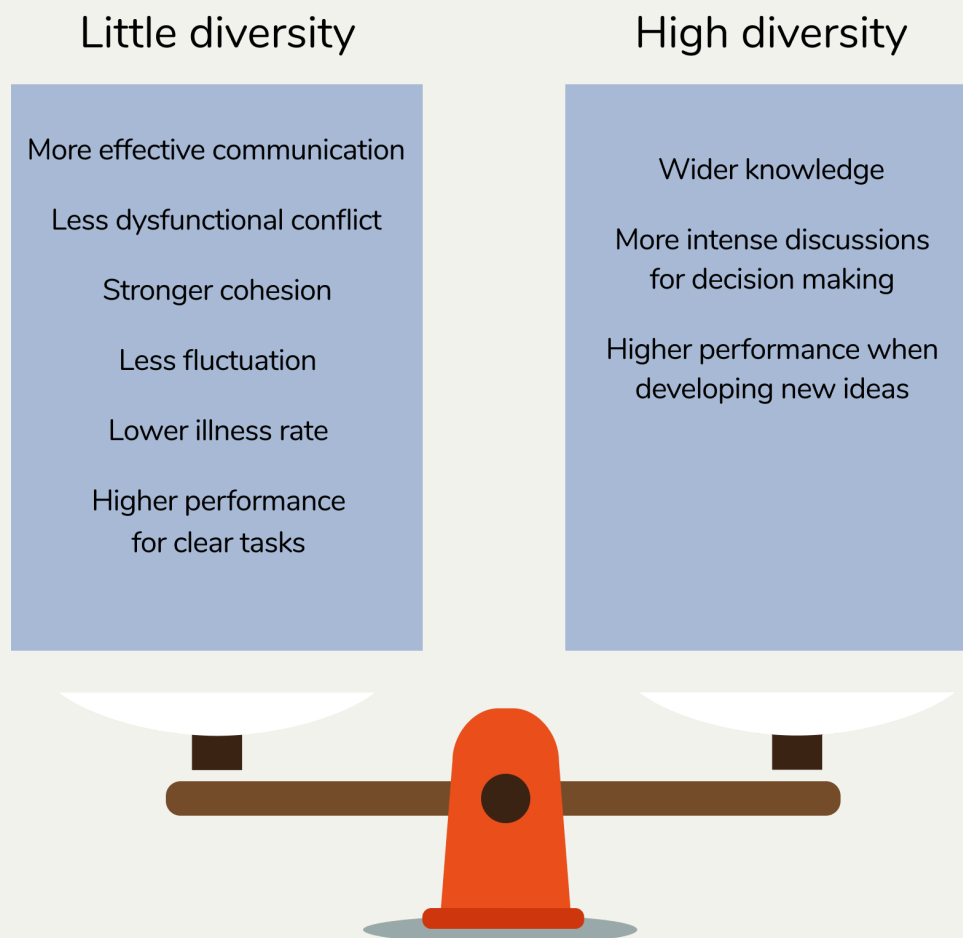
The former type of conflict is characterized by discussion, creative thinking, and good decision making. The latter is characterized by blaming, emotional tension, and dysfunction. Guess which one is better?

Here is another rather counterintuitive fact I would like to mention: One common reason for conflict... is diversity.

### **A quick comment on diversity**

Diversity is trending. People love it, probably because they love the idea behind it: Equality. Well, I also love the idea behind it.

But people often misunderstand diversity. To put it simply: The decision to build a diverse team or not should be decided depending upon your task (see chapter eight for more on that). To understand my point, take a look at the following graphic (based on [Becker, 2016](#), p. 50).



Be aware of the advantages as well as the disadvantages of diversity. If decisions are to be made and thoroughly thought through, heterogeneous teams are more suitable. If decisions are to be made quickly, effectively and routinely implemented, more homogeneous teams should be in place.

Generally, a task with a tight deadline, e.g. six months, will probably benefit from homogeneous teams. As I said, it depends. It is that easy. Uhm, hard.

Okay, I hope that helped cultivate the understanding that diversity can lead to conflicts. Let us get back to how to improve the conflict competence in your team.

### **A model to understand conflict**

There is a widely known model to understand different techniques of handling conflict: The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode (for more information on the topic, visit [their website](#)).

The researchers Ken Thomas and Ralph Kilmann developed it quite a while ago ([1976](#)). It can still be of great help when developing teams.

Basically, the model assumes that there are five styles of handling conflict. Have a look at the graphic below to see the five modes, graded on the two dimensions “cooperativeness” and “assertiveness” (based on [Ogunyemi, Fong, Elmore, Korwin & Azziz, 2010](#) and [the WorkshopBank](#)).

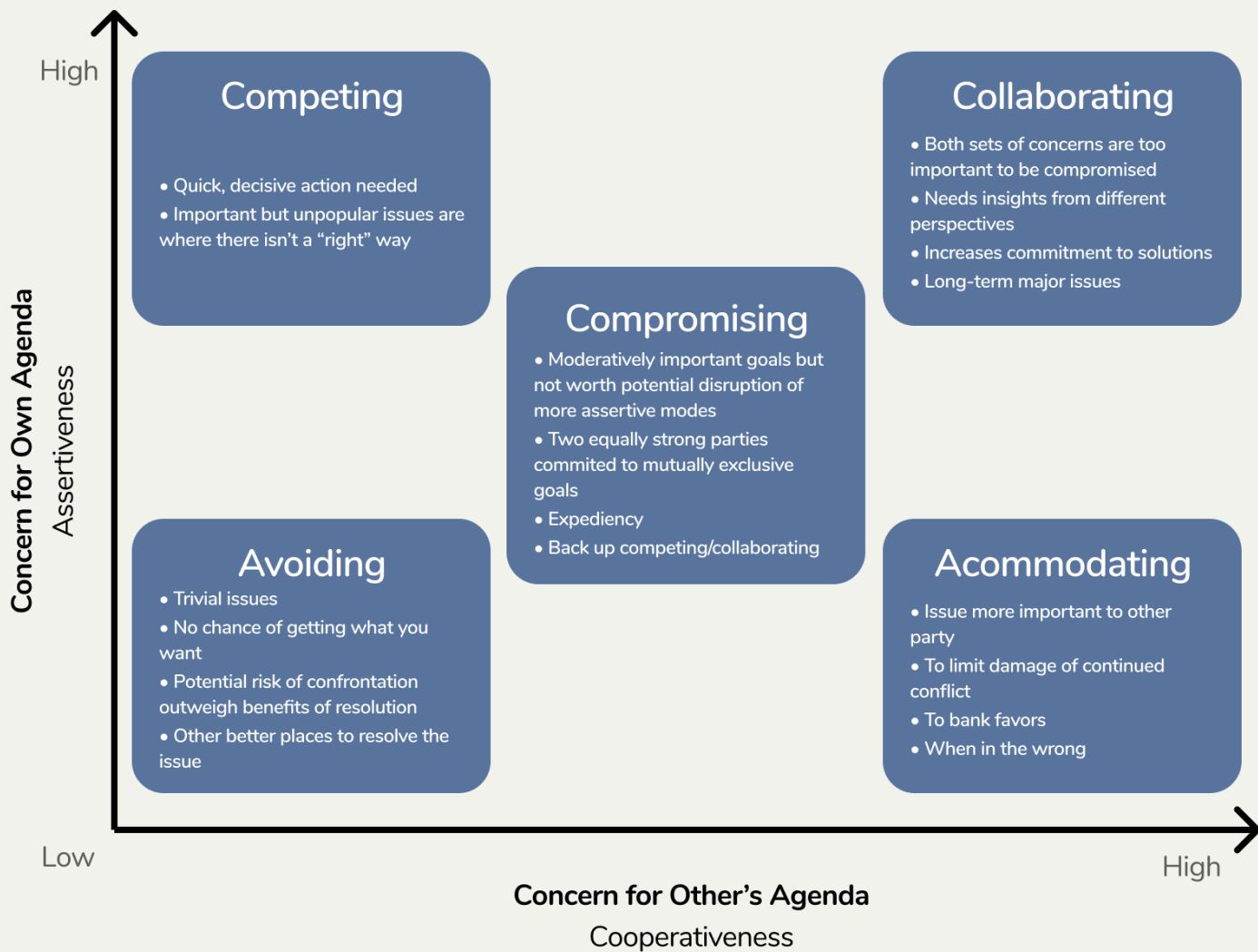
I like the different names of the dimensions here: “Concern for own agenda” vs. “concern for other’s agenda”.

Each style is appropriate in a specific situation and represents a set of useful social skills. As the authors put it ([Thomas & Killman, 1972](#)):

Our conventional wisdom recognizes, for example, that often “two heads are better than one” (Collaborating). But it also says, ““Kill your enemies with kindness” (Accommodating), “Split the difference” (Compromising), “Leave well enough alone” (Avoiding), and “Might makes right” (Competing).

It is time to raise awareness about these different conflict styles in order to test the preferred conflict modes of your team members.





### How to measure conflict styles

We can do this using the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument.

As the original Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument is not free of charge, I tried to collect the available information on the internet in order to develop a good substitute.

By the way: I do not recommend buying the original instrument. Numerous studies (e.g., the studies "[Predictive validity of the MODE conflict instrument](#)" and "[Using Parametric Statistics to Explore the Construct Validity of the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Survey](#)") question the validity and reliability of the original instrument.

Thus, team members should not interpret the results of the following exercise as the "only truth." Still, the following goals should be met through the workshop:

1. It opens up a conversation that does not define conflict as “bad”.
2. Shows every team member that there are different ways you can deal with conflict and every single one of them has value.
3. Helps team members to reflect on their conflict behavior.

In the following, you can find instructions (based on [this](#) and [this](#)).

### The instructions

*Think about your behavior in your team when confronted with conflicts. How well do the following thinking and behavioral patterns describe you in those situations from 1 (disagree) to 5 (agree)?*

*Write the number beside the statement.*

I sometimes avoid taking positions which could create controversy.	NE__
I apologize and don't pursue my interests further.	XC__
I try to delay discussions and problem solving.	NU__
I try to convince others of the logic and benefits of my position.	MI__
I listen to what the other person has to say.	UI__
I press to get my points made.	MR__
I tell the other person my ideas and ask for theirs.	IR__
I think it is important to be able to give in.	XU__
I will surrender and hope that the other one does the same.	UM__
I hope that the conflict will resolve itself.	NR__
I blame the other party.	MB__
I sit down with the other party and sort it out.	IX__
I propose a middle ground.	UX__
If it makes other people happy, I might let them maintain their views.	XI__
I emphasize that I do not wish to talk about the conflict.	NI__
I try to enforce my demands and views fully.	MI__
I always lean toward a direct discussion of the problem.	IM__

It is important to me that in the end everyone is happy. IU\_\_

I rarely care about something so much that I'd like to fight for it. XR\_\_

I suggest we meet in the middle. UM\_\_

Your name \_\_\_\_\_

*Note: There will probably be the "social desirability bias" in place: the tendency to vote what is viewed as the "best" answer or what that person "would like to do" in those situations (vs. how that person actually behaves).*

*To decrease that bias, you could ask the team members to additionally vote on other persons of the team - how do you think they would behave? Assuming the team members know each other well enough and you have enough time, I would recommend doing so. Two to five raters would be perfect.*

### Evaluating the results

To evaluate the results, everybody totals up their answers for the five different codes (which stand for the five conflict styles). Following are the instructions on how your team can score themselves after answering all the questions.

"Total up the numbers where the code begins with an "N" and write it down at the bottom of your page, e.g., "N = 14". Now go on with this procedure for the codes beginning with "X", "M", "U" and "I"."

The second letter of the code can be ignored. It is just added to make it harder to guess the connections between the statements.

When everybody has completed this, you collect the results and give your team members a 5 to 10 minute break. Make sure that everybody wrote their name on the page. During the break time you will decode which code stands for which conflict style using the information below:

Code begins with "N": AVOID

Code begins with "X": ACCOMMODATE

Code begins with "M": COMPETE

Code begins with "U": COMPROMISE

Code begins with “I”: COLLABORATE

You should write the actual conflict styles next to the letters. At the end of the workshop, you can hand out this “conflict style profile” back to the team members.

## Instructions for the workshop

You now have a picture of how these conflict styles are distributed on your team. Now it is time to experience how they come into action. Here is an overview of the steps that have to be taken:

1. You begin the workshop by saying that you prepared a team building challenge for the team. So you do not mention that the whole session is about conflict styles!

Then, you explain that you would like to begin the workshop with a little questionnaire. Say to the team that it is about a different topic that you will want to work on in a different workshop. Let them know that it takes some time and because you have extra time today, you would like to do the questionnaire now.

The goal here is to make it difficult for them to notice a connection between the questionnaire and their task later on.

By the way: If you have the time to take 30 minutes a few days before the workshop to fill out the questionnaire, I would recommend doing so.

2. At best, the team members forget about the questionnaire.
3. Based on the results, you split the team into groups of at least three people. Depending on how many team members there are, you could split them into five groups - the five conflict styles - by noting which individuals have the highest mode score in each category.

As you probably have less than 15 team members, two suggestions: 1. If you have the opportunity to do so, you could do this workshop with members of a different team. 2. If you can not do so, or want to do this workshop only on your team, split the team into groups based on the more “contrarian” conflict styles.

I.e., you could form one group of persons with avoidance conflict styles and one group

with the collaborating conflict styles. Or form two groups of the "competing" ones vs. the "accommodating" ones.

4. The teams conduct the NASA Exercise "Survival on the Moon" you can find [following this link](#). It is fun! During the exercise, the group has to discuss the different opinions and underlying convictions of its members, thus having to deal with conflicts.
5. For the next step, I will hand over the word to Ralph Kilman ([Kilman, 2016](#)):

*"When the groups have completed this assignment, the facilitator provides the "right answer" of the rankings, which are based on the views and rationale of noted experts in the survival field. This affords some very interesting calculations:*

*(1) Which individual in each group was initially closest to the expert ranking before the group discussion began?*

*(2) What is the average ranking of the members of each group, which represents the modal wisdom in the group BEFORE any group discussion took place?*

*(3) How close did each group ranking get to the expert ranking in these respects: Was the group's ranking better or worse than the group's mathematical average of individual rankings, that is, did the group get better with the discussion or get worse?"*

6. Now it gets even more interesting: You reveal the different conflict types by first explaining and showing the Thomas-Kilman model from the beginning of this workshop. Afterwards, you can hand out the results to everyone.

I will let Ralph Kilman describe his experiences ([Kilman, 2016](#)):

*"Again and again it was the MODAL HIGHEST CONFLICT MODE that swayed each group in a certain direction. In particular, in the high competing groups, the members are more concerned about having the group ranking become as close to their own ranking as possible, with little concern about developing a group ranking that is closest to the expert's.*

*The collaborating group incessantly discusses what is behind each person's view on each of the fifteen survival items, even though several of these items are ranked at the bottom of the heap (and thus are unimportant in surviving the ordeal).*

*The groups in which members are high in compromising merely vote on each item or use a calculator to develop a mathematical average (much like what is done later to measure each group's success beyond that very average!).*

*The avoiding group spends most of its time on other topics, such as the previous night's football game. And members of the accommodating group say to one another: "If you think that item should be #1 (and so forth), that's fine with me."*

7. It is time for an open discussion of this hopefully very insightful exercise.
  - a. Given these experiences, did you and the teams notice similar patterns?
  - b. Everybody knows of the different conflict styles. Did they influence the results according to the theory?
  - c. Can anybody recall a situation where the actual conflict behavior in its most typical form occurred?
  
8. You could end the session through trying to bring together the experience and your daily work.
  - a. What conflicts happened in the last few weeks?
  - b. Which conflict styles were used when dealing with them?
  - c. Would there have been a better style to deal with them?
  - d. Do you maybe want to write down a team rule (see workshop 1) about how to deal with or behave in conflicts?

This workshop was all about accelerating people's understanding and internalization of the five conflict styles.

Oh my, it took some time to write that. Hopefully, it helps you grow your team correspondingly!

## Workshop 6: A proven, easy and powerful method to create (life) happiness



### The psychology behind it

A question nearly everyone asks themselves: How can I live a satisfied, happy life?

There are many answers to it. Many ways to achieve this. But astoundingly there is one simple method which can increase your life (and work) happiness long term ([Robustelli & Whisman, 2018](#)).

#### **“I wear my sunglasses at night”**

People perceive the world through filters ([DiMaggio, 1997](#)). Sometimes through a positive, sometimes through a negative lens.

Some people tend to wear yellow sunglasses in specific situations which create the perception that the sun is shining all day every day. And some people tend to wear black sunglasses in specific situations which seem to suck out the color of anything lively you look at.

Both of these lenses have their reason for existence. But as you already guessed, the yellow sun glasses - a positive view on the world - correlate more positively with life (and work) satisfaction.

Now here is the thing: You can actively work on putting a positive lens on - sustainably! And you can even train others. How?

By helping them to focus on the things they are *grateful* for. It helps to *actually see* and appreciate the amazing circumstances we live in in our western culture. It helps to make yourself aware of all the small positive things you do not even notice in everyday stress.

And if you do so regularly, it shapes your filter. It trains you to see the things you can be grateful for.

## Instructions for the workshop

This one is the shortest workshop. It is not even a workshop, it is a question.

Given my previous explanations, here is what I recommend you to do: Reserve some time in your regular meetings - it could be weekly, daily, retrospectives, Jour Fixes, whatever - to ask every team member:

Looking at the last weeks, what are you thankful for (at work or privately)?

You do not have to spend 30 minutes on this. Even just five minutes where everybody thinks about this - training their filters - is worth the effort.

You can let your team members share their thoughts in the group after brainstorming. From my experiences, this creates a positive atmosphere for your team nearly every time.

As I mentioned earlier: What I specifically like about this question is the massive empirical evidence supporting its value! According to research, the recommended frequency to ask the question and reflect on it is once every week.

The actual power of this question only comes into action if you ask it regularly. Because then, people in your team begin to actively *search for things or think more about* the things they are grateful for.

Which means, they learn to put the positive filter on in everyday life. This is the moment when long term happiness is positively influenced!



# Chapter 2: Theory and workshops

## focusing on mindset

Going back to the model of Van den Hout and Davis ([2019](#)), I now have a few specific workshops that go deeper into establishing the preconditions of team flow experiences.

After conducting these workshops and working on the preconditions themselves, a strong basis should have been laid for higher team performance.

But what if... it is still not going smoothly? Van den Hout et al. ([2017](#)) conducted their own study researching what are the blocks of team flow. These four categories are their results (see graphic):

- Motivational issues (co-worker disengagement)
- Interpersonal issues within the process of collaboration (miscommunication, negativity, disagreement, unresolved conflict)
- Task-related issues (ambiguity, disorganization, work pressure, lack of challenge)
- Environmental issues (distractions)

Well, it is hard to work on the environmental issues. From my experience, when I talk to practitioners they are always talking about the “mindset” of individuals as the biggest blocker.

I believe that “mindset” has a lot to do with the other three mentioned blockers of team flow. Which is why I would like to focus on that topic in the following workshops.

## Workshop 7: Mindset is overrated - the fundamental attribution error



### The psychology behind it

“Whose fault is it? His! It is always him! He just doesn’t have the right mindset!”

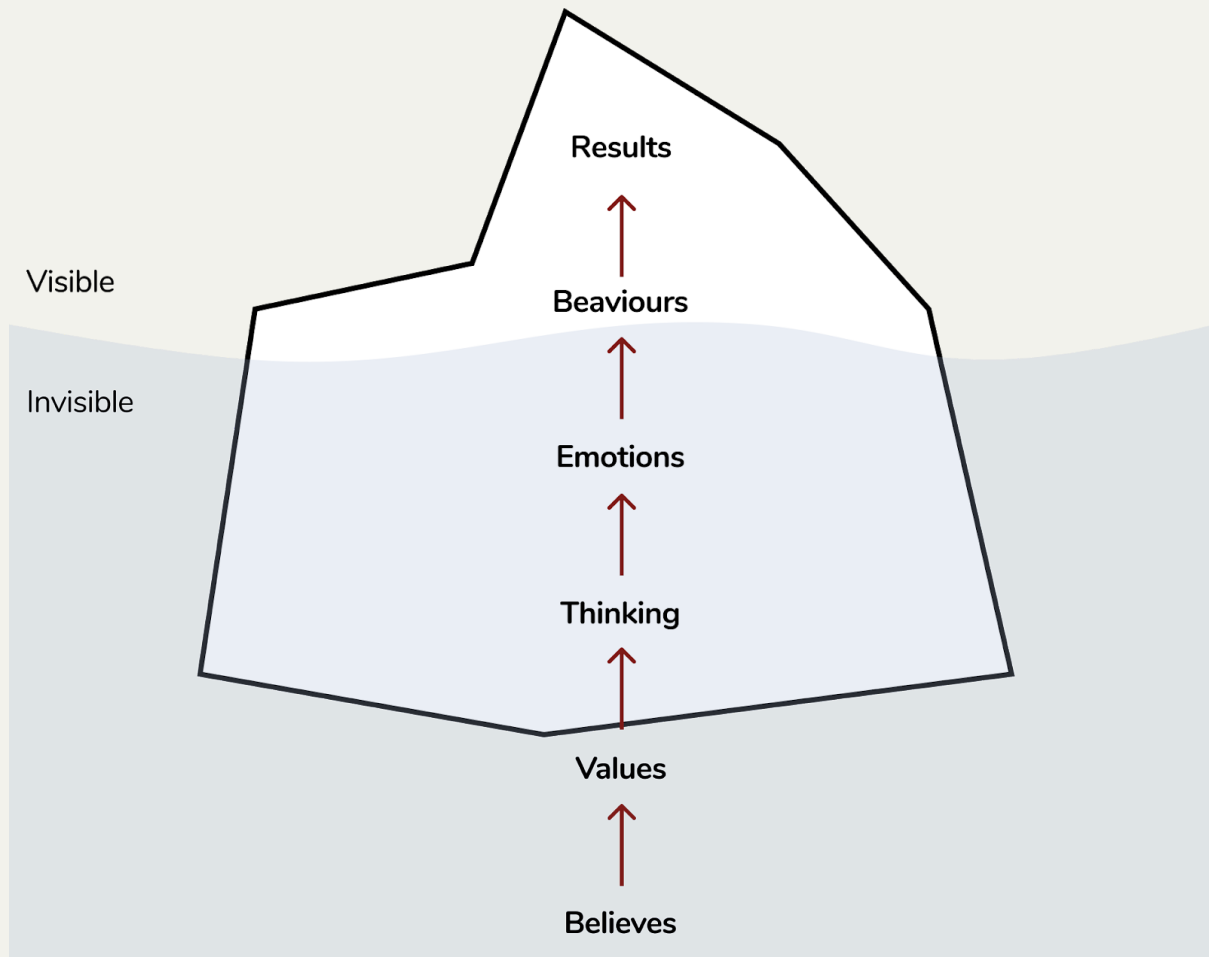
Ever had a similar thought? Well, chances are, that it was not justified.

In team development, everything is about changing behavior. How do you change behavior? By changing the “root causes” behind behavior: Mindset. Attitude.

At least, that's what people think! Graphics like this iceberg foster this common understanding of how to change behavior and performance (see graphic below based on [this](#)).

Of course, graphics like these are not wrong and help us understand parts of what is relevant to change behavior. But I have a problem with the fact that this just focuses on the individual.

To put it in a nutshell: People saying “she has the wrong mindset” are wrong. Okay, that was a little dramatic. But I want to make a point here: If you want to change behavior you can start with the person - that is what we tend to do. But you can also start from different angles.

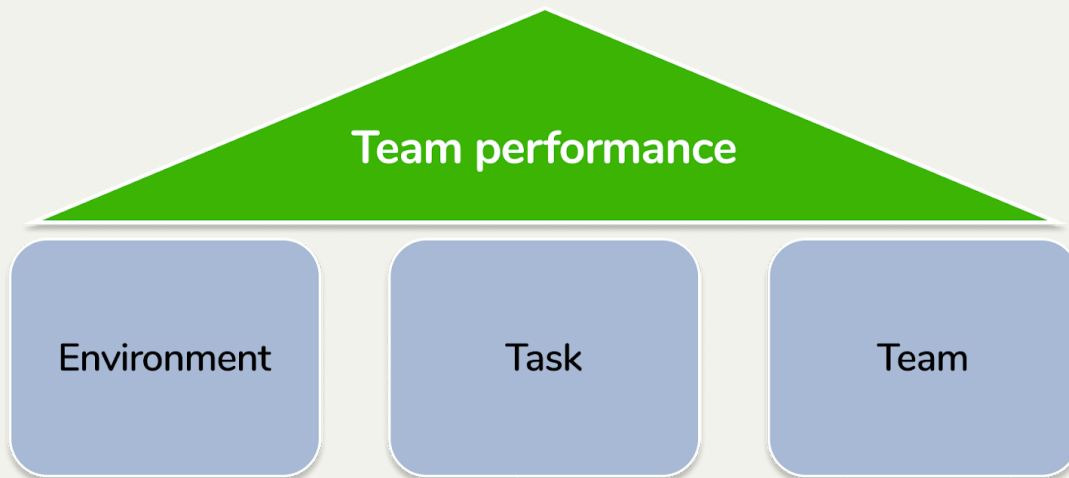


Team performance is based on three things: The team, its task and the surrounding or situation the team is addressing (also see the following graphic; [Becker, 2016](#)).

Imagine you are in the best soccer team in the world. And you are playing against the second best team in the world - but not in soccer, but in basketball. Well, in this case this is probably the wrong *task* for your team. No wonder if your performance will not hit expectations (for an exercise focusing on “task”, see workshop 8).

Or imagine you are participating in the European-wide “Summer hackathon”. 48 hours to build the MVP of your product. But interestingly, your team - like every other team working from Spain - does pretty badly. The polish teams, however, dominate the top ten list. Are polish teams better programmers?

Well, no. In Spain that summer, there was a massive heat wave. It was nearly impossible to concentrate and produce a single bit of well written code.



### What to do about “bad performance”

What would be the right step in both scenarios? Focus on the attitude of the individual team members? To train them to death? Probably not. It is likely better to critically assess the *matching of team, task and surrounding*.

Accordingly, psychotherapeutic interventions sometimes also do not focus on the person, but on the situation that the person is in. E.g., one step in psychotherapy sometimes is to change the place where the patient lives.

Every stimulus in a place where you live - the old couch, the dark bedroom, the dirty kitchen - is a cue and trigger for a specific behavior. Drug addicts are not drug addicts because they have the wrong attitude. It rather is the situation they are in that leads to their behavior. (And there are obviously many other factors that play a role here.)

### The fundamental attribution error

The tendency to overestimate the influence of the character of a person and underestimate the influence of the situation is called “fundamental attribution error”. This error should also play an important role in your team development.

Everyone (at least in our western society; [Choi, Nisbett & Norenzayan, 1999](#)) falls victim to the tendency the fundamental attribution error describes, which leads to problems in your team you can avoid.

Jeff Sutherland talks about the fundamental attribution error in his famous book “The Art of Doing Twice the Work in Half the Time” ([2014](#)). According to him, the whole idea of Scrum is about changing the situation, not the person.

It is important to view the framework “Scrum” Sutherland is introducing in his book from that angle. Because many people (from my experience) think that “you better start with mindset, Scrum is for the next level of developing your organization”, although Scrum itself with all its Events (thus, a different situation) is a starting point to work on mindset.

Try to change the situation first, which already serves as a trigger to change mindsets - that is the underlying hypothesis of Scrum.

Therefore, it is time to make everyone aware of the effect and help understand what Scrum and similar Frameworks are about. This will serve to make everyone more empathic for the often unconscious root causes of the behavior.

## Instructions for the Workshop

Just telling your team about the fundamental attribution error is not enough. It is better to experience how the effect comes into play. Thereby, it will increase the empathy in your team.

Here are the steps of an exercise to do so (based on [this](#)).

1. Pair two people randomly. If they do not know each other, let them get to know each other for a few moments.
2. Now, give them the following questionnaire about the other person with 12 different characteristics, which they are asked to fill out.

The person is (for more information, see [here](#))...

a. quiet	talkative	depends on situation
b. creative	logical	depends on situation
c. firm	flexible	depends on situation
d. optimistic	realistic	depends on situation
e. introverted	extroverted	depends on situation
f. individualistic	collectivist	depends on situation
g. easy going	high-strung	depends on situation
h. traditional	progressive	depends on situation
i. stubborn	open-minded	depends on situation
j. trusting	cautious	depends on situation

- |    |        |             |                      |
|----|--------|-------------|----------------------|
| k. | leader | team player | depends on situation |
| l. | humble | prideful    | depends on situation |
3. In the next step, everybody fills out the same questionnaire for themselves.
  4. Ask all participants to count the number of times they marked “depends on situation” for *others*.
    - a. Calculate the average of that
  5. Ask all participants to count the number of times they marked “depends on situation” for *themselves*.
    - a. Calculate the average of that and compare the two numbers.
  6. The following pattern should emerge: People say “depends on the situation” more often for themselves than for others.  
 In other words, people attribute a behavior or characteristic (correctly) on the *situation* for themselves, and attribute it (falsely) on the *person* or its “mindset” for others.

Hopefully, this workshop alters the described tendency. Maybe, then next time when somebody in the team makes a fault or somebody in the team is new, the reaction is not

“What is wrong with them? They do not fit in here!”

but

“What influences in our surroundings or their task may have caused that behavior? Are we as the team, who also shape the surrounding and task, maybe part of the root cause of that behavior?”

#TeamReflectionIsOn

## Workshop 8: Mindset is overrated - the task health check



### PART 2

As I explained in the previous workshop, there are three parts that influence team performance. The team itself (which many coaches focus on), its surrounding and its task.

In the following workshop, I would like to try to work on the “mindset” through focusing on one of the three pillars it is influenced by - the task.

### The psychology behind it

Ever wondered why video games are so amazingly popular? Why do they foster so much intrinsic motivation? There are a few reasons for this - see workshop 11 - and one of them is because they design the perfect tasks.

If you want to increase the motivation of your team I suggest you start by analyzing and actively designing the task it is conducting.

The following graphic gives you the necessary information for this team development method. In the middle, you can see what a really motivating task is about ([Becker, 2016](#)).



As you can see, great parts of a well designed task are similar to the preconditions of team flow. Thank god, there is a pattern!

It is about six things.

- **Feedback:** A good task gives you feedback about where exactly you stand and how good you are performing. E.g., in video games, after every level, you get a score - an objective feedback - about how close you are to reach your goal.
- **Goals:** Much has been written about the right kind of goals which is why I did not focus on this topic in this eBook. To put it in a nutshell, you could ask three questions: Do your goals match the SMART-criteria (for more on that, [see this](#))? Do you work in an environment where *learning* or *performance* goals are appropriate? Are the goals of team members clearly *interconnected*?
- **Autonomy:** Creativity can flow only if you have the feeling that there is room for freedom, room to do it your way.
- **Purpose:** Well, that one is pretty popular at the moment. Still, it is one of many factors. Do you actually notice regularly that your task serves a purpose? That it affects the life of other people?
- **Completeness:** This one comes from earlier times when workers conducted the same task in the car factory all day, week for week - which obviously was not good for their motivation. It is important to know and work on the whole process of what you are producing.



- Variety: Our brains need regular stimulation - in a balanced way. Changes of duties, work techniques or team members are helpful in stimulating our brains desire for variety. In earlier days, workers in a factory were highly specialized and did not experience enough variety. In today's world, the opposite is the case as so much is changing constantly - #digitalization.

Now we know the six dimensions we can work on when designing our task. Let's go!

## Instructions for the workshop

It is time to analyse the tasks you are conducting in your team. We will use the following approach.

1. Before the workshop it is important that the team knows the background I just explained. Maybe they already know because you conducted workshop seven to show the team how they overestimate the influence of individuals on team performance.

If you did not conduct workshop seven yet, communicate them the message that team performance is influenced by three things (see second graphic in workshop 7): Task, team, surrounding.

Also communicate that within this workshop, you would like to analyze if the tasks of your team are designed to optimally foster performance.

2. Next, you have to explain to the team the six variables a well designed task is about.
3. After everyone understood the six variables, it is time for some action. Everybody now rates the six variables for themselves: How do I personally perceive this on a day to day basis from 1 (I need more of that) to 7 (I have enough of that)?

The following questions may help you describe what your team members have to have in mind when rating.

- Feedback: How often does the task give me feedback? E.g., software developers get error messages if their code is not working properly. Sometimes there is not such a clear feedback loop. In these cases, do colleagues give feedback as an alternative?

- **Goals:** Does our task include the right kind of goals? Do we have clear goals? Do we have goals that - if we reach them - are as much fun as winning a sports match or reaching the next level in a video game?
- **Autonomy:** Do I have enough room and authority to decide and be as creative as I would like to be to solve the problems of my daily job? What could I do if I were to have more autonomy?
- **Purpose:** How much do I have the feeling that there are people who benefit from my work? How often am I in contact with them?

If I would have ten healthy years left to live - would I stay in this team or what would I work on (that is a tough one)?

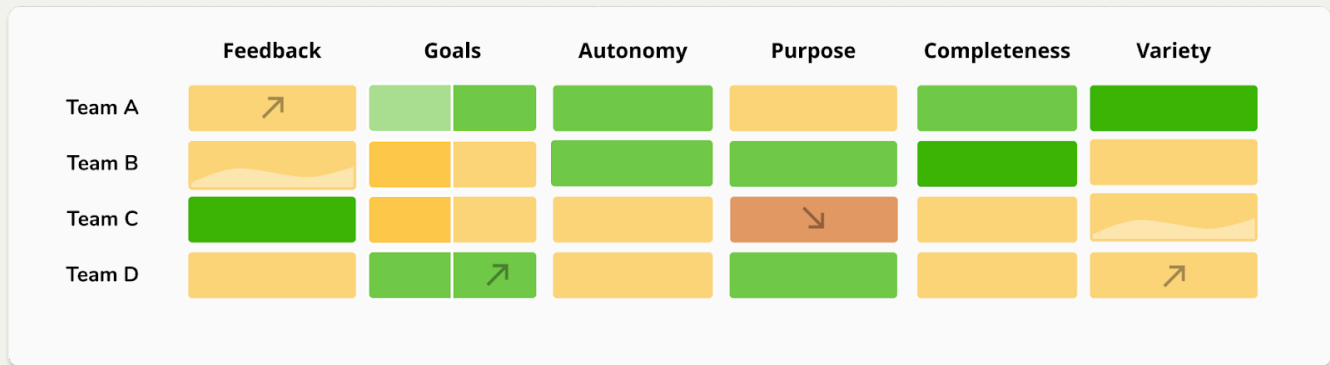
- **Completeness:** How good do I understand the whole process the product I am working on is going through? How good do I understand what exactly my contribution is to the vision and mission of the company? How much would I profit from experiencing earlier (e.g., Marketing and Sales) and later parts (e.g., customer success & support) of the value creation process of my company?
- **Variety:** The only thing that is constant is change. Do we have too much or too little change in our team? Is my average stress level healthy? Do I have too much task switching?

To organize this workshop as interactive as possible, I recommend that you go through the six variables one by one. E.g., team members shortly say and explain their number for the first variable “feedback”. Then that person sticks that number on a flipchart (you prepared) from 1 to 7 for the dimension “feedback”.

After everybody does this, you read through the questions for “goals” and everybody thinks about how they would rate this. Again, team members present and explain their feeling about this shortly and stick their number to the flipchart. And so on.

At the end, you should have a “task health check”. If you do it with many teams and translate the numbers into colors (1 = red, 7 = fresh green), it could look something like this:

## Team Health Check Heatmap



4. On this basis, you can discuss your “task health”. Where do opinions or perceptions diverge the most? Where is the lowest average? Where does the team have the biggest “pain point”?

5. ...and of course: What can you do about it? You should try to derive some action items from the discussion.

E.g., you noticed that one of the team members, Edith, misses feedback on how she is doing. Possibly, you can not change her task. But in that case you can work around it and start to implement a feedback routine with her direct colleague, Simon. First action item/experiment: Once every two weeks, they talk 15 minutes about their mutual performance. Of course, the action items also could be derived for the whole team.

Hopefully, this task health check triggered some interesting discussions - and action items.

The nice thing about it, as with every health check: You can do this again after a few months to check how you developed.

Alright. The last two workshops - as you noticed - really did not focus on the individual mindset, but the factors influencing it. Now it is time to actually go on the individual level.

## Workshop 9: Personality - a valid model



### The psychology behind it

During my Scrum Master education, our trainer, a really nice and bright woman, also introduced us to the “DiSC” Personality Model.

As a psychologist, I have to admit, that hurt.

There are many popular models that try to help you understand personality: DiSC, Insights, MBTI, 16 Personalities...

But from the perspective of science - taking into account validity, objectivity and reliability - there clearly is a “best” model. The only model you can trust at least a little.

I will explain the model to you shortly. But before that I would like to explain why it is the “best” model. A good way to do that is the “Barnum effect”. The what?

### **The Barnum effect**

American psychologist Bertram Forer conducted an experiment in 1948 in which he had his students take a personality test. He then handed out a “personal character description” to each

of them as a test result and asked them to rate the truthfulness of this evaluation on a scale of 0 to 5. The average score was 4.26 points. Thus, the evaluation was perceived as pretty precise.

In fact, Forer had not evaluated the test at all, but had given all participants the *exact same results*, which he had previously compiled from texts in a horoscope available at the kiosk ([Forer, 1949](#)).

Holy S\*\*\*. At the kiosk! In other words: It is very easy to build a personality test where people think “Oh yeah, that is so true, amazing test!” but which actually has no validity at all.

But thank god, psychologists also tried to develop a valid personality model - and it more or less worked!

They developed the BIG Five personality traits, also known as the OCEAN model ([McCrae & John, 1992](#)). Cambridge Analytica also used the model. Very smart of them.

So what are the five personality traits that actually have a valid base? Here you go:

O penness

C onscientiousness

E xtraversion

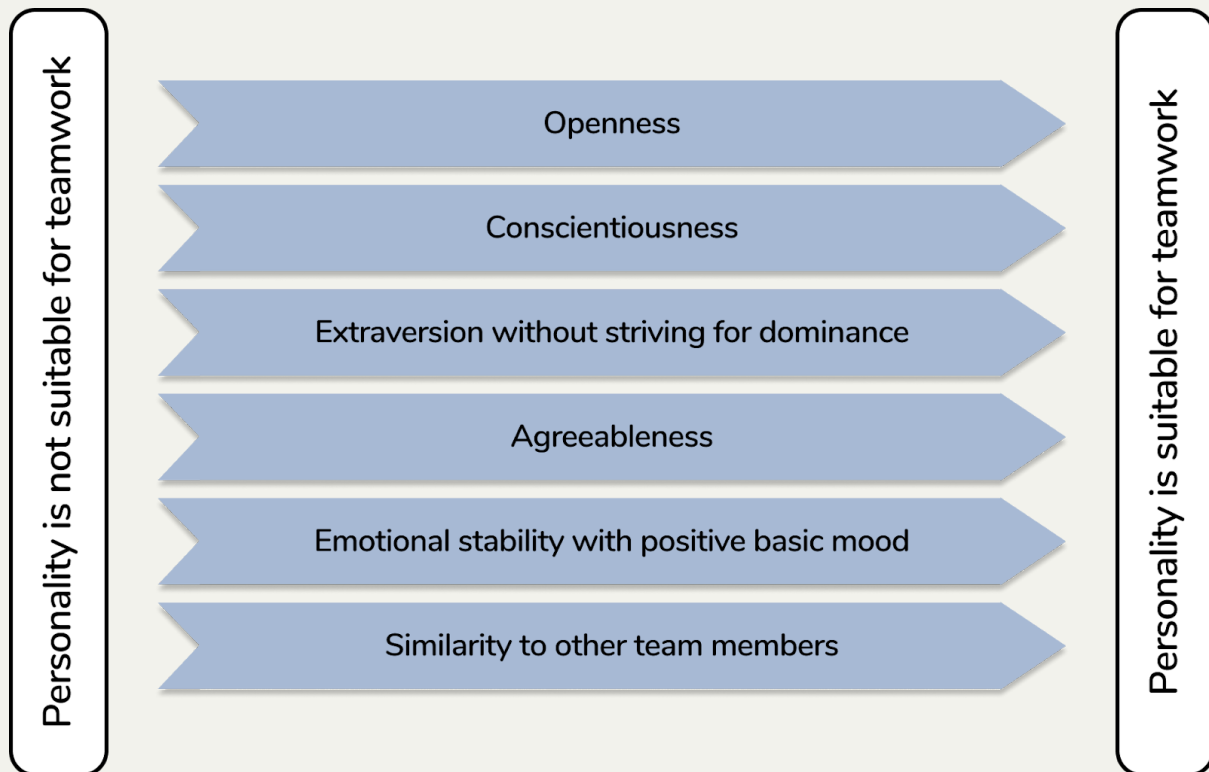
A ssertiveness

N euroticism / Emotional stability

Alright. So what can we do with this?

Good question. Most of the time, you cannot pick your teammates. The interesting question remains... if you could, what kind of personalities would be the best ones for a team?

As a heuristic, you could use the following graphic to answer it (based on [Becker, 2016](#)).



So in most cases, a rather high manifestation of these personality traits is helpful. In case of neuroticism, when working in teams it is better to have a lower manifestation. In other words, to be highly emotionally stable (the opposite of neuroticism). For a better understanding of what each of the five dimensions are, have a look into the survey below.

One dimension is added to the BIG Five Model in the graphic: Similarity. Why? Because similarity - "as opposite of diversity?!" you might think - helps to keep conflicts down and communication up. For more on that, see Workshop 5.

Now, let us actually talk about how you can use this information to develop your team.

## Instructions for the workshop

Here is what you can do: You can raise attention to the importance of different personality styles. How to cluster them, thereby fostering a mutual understanding in the team - helping to build a shared and accurate mental model of personalities.

Specifically, the following process might guide you when introducing the model.

1. Explain the OCEAN Model to your team. If you would like to, you could also explain the Barnum effect and why many other personality tests are rather worthless. I would like that. But it is optional.
2. In the following, you can find items that measure the BIG Five in a questionnaire (a short version; [Han, Gottschling & Spinath, 2012](#)).

*Note: The ending (R) means that the item would have to be reversed before evaluating the test. In case of neuroticism or emotional stability, a higher score means higher emotional stability.*

### **Openness**

I see myself as someone who is original, comes up with new ideas.

I see myself as someone who values artistic experiences.

I see myself as someone who has an active imagination.

### **Conscientiousness**

I see myself as someone who tends to be lazy. (R)

I see myself as someone who does a thorough job.

I see myself as someone who does things effectively and efficiently.

### **Extraversion**

I see myself as someone who is communicative, talkative.

I see myself as someone who is outgoing, sociable.

I see myself as someone who is reserved. ®

### **Assertiveness**

I see myself as someone who has a forgiving nature.

I see myself as someone who is sometimes somewhat rude to others. (R)

I see myself as someone who is considerate and kind to others.

### **Neuroticism / Emotional stability**

I see myself as someone who worries a lot. (R)

I see myself as someone who gets nervous easily. (R)

I see myself as someone who is relaxed, handles stress well.

3. You now go through each of these five traits one by one with your team. The items in the table serve as specific anchors of what the specific personality trait is. E.g, how people with “high openness” are characterized.

- a. You draw a line on the floor, e.g. with arrays from 1 to 7. You could also use tape to mark it.
- b. You pick one person in the team.
- c. Everybody shares how open they perceive that person to be. The following instructions may help:

- i. Look at the statements characterizing “openness”. Also think of situations within the last weeks and months where you worked with that person.

*Note: That step is very important. Situations are more objective and therefore more valuable than just “opinions” here. Through “priming” the team members this way on actual situations, the danger of the “halo-effect” is lowered - at least a little.*

- ii. Given these thoughts: How open is this person from 1 (not at all) to 7 (completely)?
- iii. Everybody writes down their number.
- iv. Afterwards, everybody stands by their chosen number on the floor.

*Note: Why also write the number down? So that nobody spontaneously changes their opinion because of social norms (see workshop 2), thus, to minimize groupthink.*

- d. The person everybody is focusing on just watches the others. When everybody is situated on the markers, the person can reveal the number they chose.



- e. Now it is time to discuss the results.
    - i. How different is that person perceived? Why?
    - ii. The persons situated on the extremes of the scale could explain their view. Giving situations as explanations is highly recommended.
    - iii. What is the most surprising observation about the person everybody is focusing on?
    - iv. In which situations is there a “different kind of personality” visible? E.g., maybe the person could be really energetic and talkative in sales calls, but afterwards, the person generally is rather reserved (the example applies to the factor “extraversion”).
  - f. If you want to, you could write down the results for everybody and document them (taking into account the “vegas rule”, obviously: what happens in the team, stays in the team).

You could also build a “team personality map” of how the five personality traits are distributed in the team. That map is great for later workshops if you want to reflect how the personality types lead to specific behaviors in specific situations.
  - g. This process is repeated for every team member.
  - h. If everyone has completed the tasks and is in the right kind of mood, you could even go deeper: Do people recognize patterns where a specific combination of specific personality types in two or more persons have been very successful? Or do people maybe recognize root causes of old and new conflicts because of a rather unhealthy combination of personality types when two or more persons worked together?
4. At the end, team members should have a picture of how they are perceived and how everyone views themselves.

*Please keep one thing in mind: Although this is the best available personality model, the personality traits may manifest completely different depending on the situation you are in. For example, as a kid I always was pretty shy.*

But interestingly, when I played soccer with my friends (I was rather good at it) I could not stop talking. Don't ask me why it was that way. Studying psychology also did not help me understand myself. Anyway, for more on this, see chapter one on the "fundamental attribution error".

Additionally, you could also remind the team members at the end of the workshop that the results of this workshop probably are not absolutely precise and - in best case - are valid for their current working situation, but not generally. The main goal of this workshop rather was to see behavior in the team from a different angle. And to develop the same mental model of personality.

### **Mindset & personality**

By the way: As a rule of thumb, roughly 50% of our personality is genetically predisposed (for more on that, see [Guo, 2005](#)). How about the rest? The rest is formed based on our experiences. Our social environment. In the cultural context we grow up in. Theoretically, of course you can also change your personality.

And parts of our mindset probably form because of our personality (at least, they correlate partly; [Furnham, 2014](#)). So to understand mindset and how it forms, it is helpful to also understand personality. This is why we worked on this during this workshop.

And to work on mindset itself, the next workshop comes into play.

# Workshop 10: Fantastic Growth Mindsets and how to find them



## The psychology behind it

So what is “mindset”? Good question! The word is so overused. We will use the only scientific definition of it I know - by Stanford Professor [Carol Dweck](#).

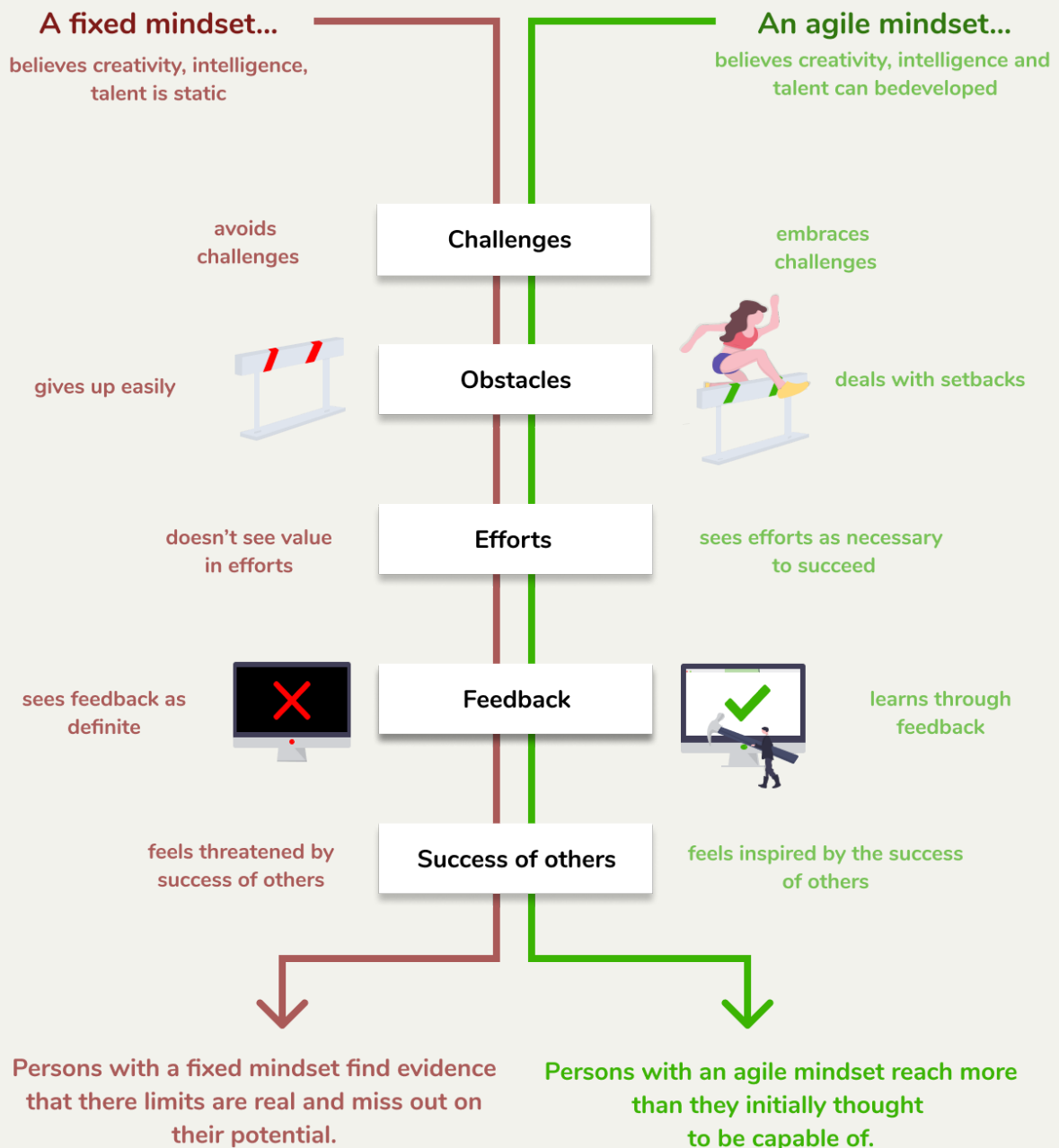
### **What is mindset**

Dweck ([2006](#)) distinguishes between the *fixed* and *growth* mindset. People who tend to have a fixed mindset assume that their creativity, intelligence and talent are fixed, i.e. unchangeable.

The logical consequence of this attitude is that nothing is worth the effort. Mistakes are bad and you make them because you are just not capable of the task. Constructive criticism is useless, and so on.

People with a Growth Mindset, on the other hand, believe in the possibility of continuous personal development ([Dweck, 2006](#)). This leads to a transformation in the meaning of "effort" and "difficulty" - both are part of the way.

The Growth Mindset perceives defeat as information about what needs to be done differently - not as a diagnosis of low talent. The graphic (based on the visualization by [Nigel Holmes](#)) summarizes the difference of the two mindsets.



As always you have to keep in mind, people are not either A or B. There is a continuum between fixed and growth mindset, with some people tending towards fixed and others towards growth mindset (Burnette et al., 2013). Similarly, it can vary between skills - I may have a fixed mindset about my creativity, but a growth mindset about how I deal with difficult clients.

### Why are growth mindsets so valuable?

Good questions, let me give you two examples.

- Example 1: People with a Growth Mindset believe that they can improve their sociability and overcome their shyness. They perceive social situations as valuable opportunities to learn.

Introverts with a Growth Mindset are therefore perceived as more socially competent than introverts with a Fixed Mindset ([Beer, 2002](#)), although both can actually be "equally introverted". Wow, yes, everybody can be "less shy" and more communicative, even the seemingly quietest person in the world!

- Example 2: How can we improve cooperation, avoid overly fast judgements and thus improve the culture of failure in companies? By developing team members into Growth Mindsets. A fixed mindset means that only a single piece of unwanted behavior in individuals is understood as a clear signal of who the person is as a human being ([Dweck, Chiu, Hong, 1995](#)).

One could therefore speak of a tendency to prejudice ([Levy, Stroessner & Dweck, 1998](#)) and assume that people with a fixed mindset punish others for who they are.

In a study, the following was shown ([Chiu, Dweck, Tong & Fu, 1997](#)): On the one hand, students with a fixed mindset wanted to punish a professor for changing the students grades relatively spontaneously. Students with a growth mindset, on the other hand, were more forgiving and were trying to educate the professor to make better decisions next time.

Thus, looking at mistakes through the lense of a Growth Mindset, they are interpreted as a source of learning (vs. evidence of incompetence), not only by themselves but also by others.

### **Can you work on growth mindsets?**

Hell yeah, you can.

As an example: [Yeager et al. \(2014\)](#) trained a school class and showed that eight months later the students were less frequently ill, felt less stressed and showed better performance. More examples can be found in a [Ted-Talk](#) by Carrol Dweck.

So it seems to be worth it. Where do you start?

In 1998, two researchers ([Mueller & Dweck](#)) manipulated subjects in a study so that half of the subjects had a fixed and the other half a growth mindset. How?

It is simple: In the fixed mindset group, they told the participants that they had achieved the good performance (in a previous test) because of their high "intelligence". They "created" the Growth Mindset group through justifying the good performance by their "effort".

And now it is getting interesting: the two groups were given a more difficult task afterwards. If the respondents failed here, those with the "induced" fixed mindset not only reported that they found the task less fun, they also spent less effort and did not stick to the task for as long.

Again, it seems to be worth it to have a growth mindset. And sometimes it forms through simple cultural wording of companies!

Sadly, in many companies that also has a negative effect.

The company "Enron", for example, boasts that it only recruits the "smartest". At the same time, employees who belong to the 10 to 15% worst performers - are fired. This leaves no doubt that, from the management's point of view, employees can hardly be developed further - in other words, the fixed mindset is being promoted ([Keating & Heslin, 2015](#)).

Enough said. I hope you got it. The growth mindset is a valuable concept that can be very important in developing teams and organizations.

Let us develop your team!

## Instructions for the workshop

Have you ever heard of "learned helplessness" ([Seligman & Maier, 1967](#))? According to [Wikipedia](#), it is the conviction (developed on the basis of negative experience) of having lost the ability to change one's own life situation and of being responsible for this state of affairs oneself.

Oops, we do not want that, and yet, we partly contribute to an equivalent state - the Fixed Mindset. So, how can we work on the growth mindset in your team?

There are methods for that I will explain in the following. The content is based on a study by [Heslin, Latham and Vandewalle \(2005\)](#). The researchers trained managers in the Growth Mindset. This resulted in 5 steps that led to a significant improvement of the mindset compared to a placebo control group. #ILoveScience

Here are the five steps the researchers conducted. This time, you do not have to conduct all the five steps; you could say they are all “small workshops”. So you could do all or pick your favorite ones.

### **1. Underline the growth potential of the brain**

Tell your team members the following: Neuroscientific research proves that when we learn something new, new connections develop in our brain. The brain is a *muscle* that - as recent research emphasises - can be trained even in an advanced age...

This message could be well supported by anecdotes about how people from the team's environment - including you - have learned new skills (possibly even at an advanced age).

Of course you can also bring in external stories that show how years of continuous training led to strong performances (some amazing examples can be found here: [Gladwell, 2002](#); [Colvin, 2008](#); [Dweck, 2006](#)).

### **2. Encourage counterintuitive reflection**

Let your team members find domains where they struggle to develop further (e.g. a complex new software, playing golf, learning a second language).

Now let them also find a domain where they originally had difficulties but now perform well without much effort.

They should now reflect on the latter and explain in detail the steps they have taken on their development path (e.g. setting goals, taking risks, working hard, coaching, seeking feedback, getting inspiration online...).

Then let them consider why similar approaches should not work equally well for the other challenges - where they maybe have a fixed-mindset.

### **3. Encourage counterintuitive advice**

Let team members identify someone who is important to them and who finds it difficult to believe that they can develop their skills (e.g. a parent, partner, child).

Have them write a message in their own words explaining the reasons and evidence that developing skills is possible! This can of course explicitly include their own personal experiences, which may have come out in step 2.

#### **4. Induce cognitive dissonance**

Team members have to brainstorm a situation when they experienced an extraordinary learning experience from someone close (e.g. a parent, partner, child) they never expected to see. They then have to consider how their own attitude towards this person may have affected that learning curve.

Getting people to reflect on the potentially very high cost of the fixed-mindset (also in the sense that it prevents others and oneself from developing their full potential) can be another way to promote the growth mindset.

#### **5. Role plays**

First of all, for the “anti-roleplayers”: The following procedure can of course also be modified.

In the first step, you let team members recall a situation when they reacted with the Fixed Mindset and it didn't do them any good. Now let them each write down what was going on in their head at that moment and how that stopped them from doing their best in that situation.

In the next step, let them role play themselves: First they sit down on a chair and speak from the voice of the Fixed Mindset, and then (on the opposite chair) they speak from the voice of the growth mindset. Afterwards, you can reflect together on that experience: Which of the two views was more rational? And which of them would be more helpful in that situation?

#### **Focusing on mindsets**

As I said: The last workshop is scientifically proven to work. No excuses here. You can develop your team members (totally writing from my growth mindset here)!

So theoretically, I gave you some useful hints now about what you can do to improve.

In the last chapter, I would like to explain to you two holistic models, two holistic ways to develop teams. So if you forget everything from this eBook, this is something you may not forget.



# Chapter 3: Two holistic models and workshops

The first of the two models is one that is well known in science. It is *the* model for intrinsic motivation.

## Workshop 11: *The* model for intrinsic motivation



### The psychology behind it

Everybody knows how to create extrinsic motivation #carrot. Give them a bonus, and they will run.

The - sometimes - negative effects of extrinsic motivators are widely known (for more info on that, have a look at [this](#)).

*Note: One thing to add here, maybe a broad misconception: It is not 0 & 1, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. According to motivation theory, it nearly always is a mixture. You could say someone is 40% extrinsically and 52% intrinsically motivated. It is not the same pole.*

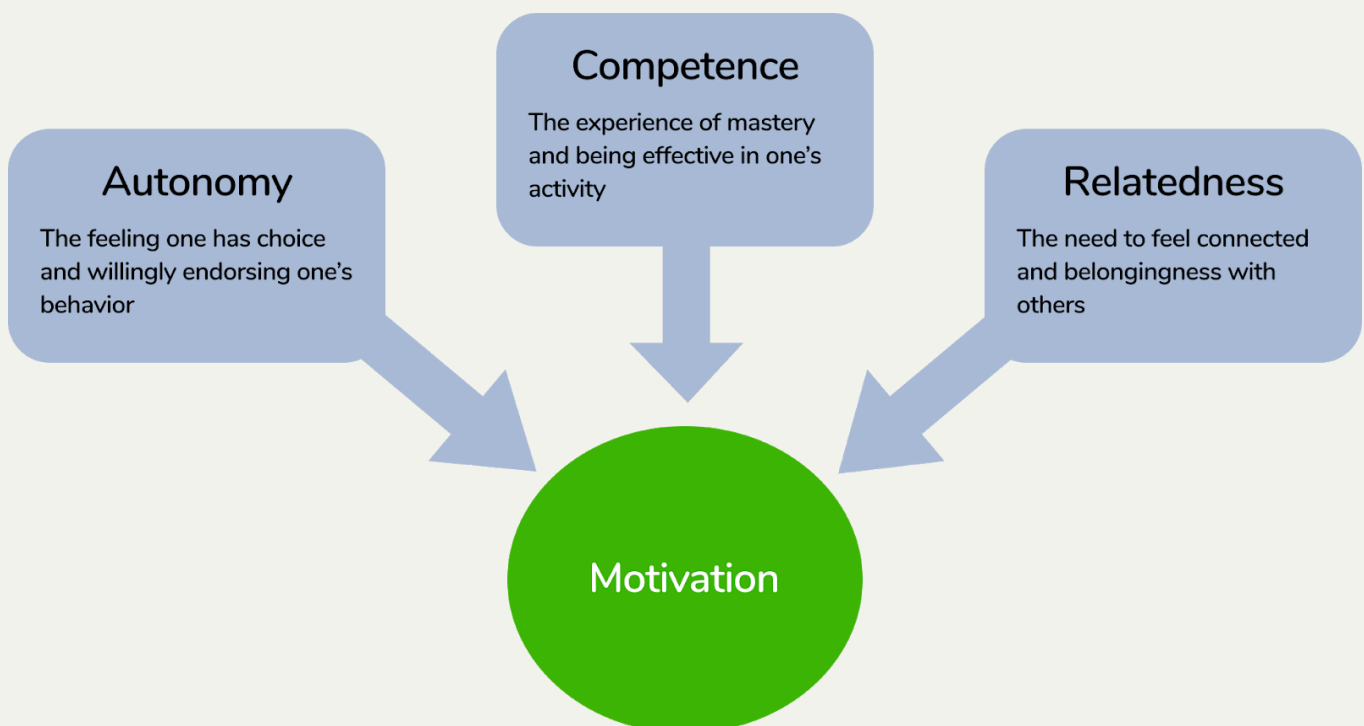
But how about intrinsic motivation? Motivation, that is much cheaper than extrinsic, seemingly endless and leads to even better performance?! Everybody wants intrinsic motivation!

Why doesn't everybody know a theory about how to create intrinsic motivation, as it obviously is so amazingly helpful? Well, I will help you with that. Social psychology has a short answer here.

Probably one of the most popular and well researched models there is in psychology: The self determination theory ([Ryan & Deci, 2000](#)).

The self determination theory says that people have three basic psychological needs. If you fulfill them, you foster intrinsic motivation. Have a look at the graphic - did you know them?

Basically, you need three things to feel motivated: You need the feeling that you can decide on your own what to do (autonomy). You need the feeling that you are effective in your activity, the experience of mastery (competence). You also need to feel connected and as if you belong with others (yep, pretty human: relatedness).



I already gave a hint why video games like "World of Warcraft" foster so much intrinsic motivation. They designed the perfect task (see workshop 8):

You are completely free to decide what to do without having to really feel consequences (autonomy).

You are playing with other players who specifically fit your level of competence, making sure you have enough success moments (competence).

And in case of World of Warcraft you also feel related to a group of people similar to you, belonging to the “in-group” (relatedness).

I am explaining this model as it summarizes many of the findings from earlier in a simple way. You could say it is a holistic model to check where your team stands. And here is a workshop that will guide you doing so.

## Instructions for the workshop

As always: If you can't measure it, you can not improve it. So let us do so.

1. Everybody fills out the survey analyzing how the three different needs are fulfilled in your team (see below). To not “prime” them in any direction, I would do that without explaining what the rest of the workshop is about. In the following, you can find the survey ([Gagné, 2003](#)).

### The survey

I feel like I am free to decide for myself how to shape my work.	OA__
I really like the people I interact with in my company. RR	OR__
Often, I do not feel very competent in my team.	KC__
People in my team tell me I am good at what I do.	NC__
I pretty much keep to myself and don't have a lot of social contacts. RR	KR__
I generally feel free to express my ideas and opinions in my team.	RA__
I have been able to learn interesting new skills recently.	RC__
People in my team care about me. RR	JR__
Most days I feel a sense of accomplishment from what I do.	IC__

People I interact with on a daily basis tend to take my feelings into consideration. IA\_\_

I feel like I can pretty much be myself in daily situations. KA\_\_

The people I interact with regularly seem to like me. RR IR\_\_

*Code ending with R: Relatedness; Code ending with A: Autonomy; Code ending with C: Competence*

### Talking about the results

There are a few ways you can talk about the results. This time I will suggest a different method than last time (see workshop 9).

2. After conducting the survey, you explain the self determination theory briefly to your team.
3. Everyone in the team evaluates the survey themselves. You have to give them the instructions explaining the codes below the survey.
4. Next, the workshop focuses on the individuals. You can try with a “peer to peer” coaching here:
  - a. You assign the team into pairs - the less they know each other, the better.
  - b. The pairs share their results mutually.
  - c. They then discuss possible situations leading to these perceptions.
  - d. Now they discuss small steps they can take within the next week and/or on a regular basis to work on the “lowest fulfilled need”.  
E.g somebody misses autonomy: Talk about how you or someone else could help them, who they could talk to or where responsibilities could be shared better.
  - e. The goal should be that everyone at least has a small action item afterwards.

What happens through not focusing on the team level here but staying in pairs?

The goal is to get to know each other better. This works really well if you have a specific and important topic you can talk about.

Additionally, within this exercise team members perceive themselves as how they should see themselves in a rather self-organizing team: Responsible for each other. Everyone can be a coach #growthMindset.

I hope this model and workshop will stay in your mind. In the last workshop, I will explain a rather different approach to continuous team development.

## Workshop 12: A sustainable approach to team development



### The psychology behind it

You already knew it before this eBook: There are an immense amount of psychological models out there. Many of them sound really appealing.

What you probably didn't know before this eBook is the *barnum effect* and what you have to look for when evaluating those psychological models: Their reliability, validity and objectivity (see workshop 9).

As I explained earlier, many studies are not representative and are therefore not transferable to other companies. For example, “Project Aristotle” by Google revealing “psychological safety” as the main predictor of team success (see workshop 2).

So what can you do about that? Which scientific results are actually trustworthy? There is a solution to it.

There is a thing called “meta-studies” or “meta-analysis”. Meta-studies basically analyse all available studies researching a specific question, e.g., what are the preconditions of innovation. Thereby, sometimes research of 30 years with hundreds of thousands of subjects in completely different areas and cultures is summarized (more on this [here](#)).

And the nice thing about that obviously is that the results are relatively trustworthy and transferable.

Just type in “meta analysis performance” or something similar into [Google Scholar](#) and you will find the best available data there is on that subject.

### **Using the results of meta analysis**

When I learned about the concept of “meta-analysis” in my studies (my professor also loved it) I was stunned. Why is not everyone basing their decisions on meta-analysis?!

Well, in many areas meta analysis are just not available. But... in the case of organizational psychology, they are.

Imagine you would search for all the available meta analysis investigating three main goals of companies: Employee engagement, innovation and behavior. What are the scientifically most significant and relevant preconditions you can work on to foster those outcomes?

*Note: Sorry about that, but now I will get a little emotional when writing about my own product. It may sound like sales. Which it is. But it is sales through valid reasoning, I hope.*

At Echometer, the software company I co-founded with Jean Michel Diaz and Robin Roschlau, this is exactly what we did. We developed a digital tool based on the results of scientific meta analysis. A tool that currently helps thousands of users developing the hack out of their team’s potential.

In the graphic below, you can see some of the preconditions of those three outcomes.

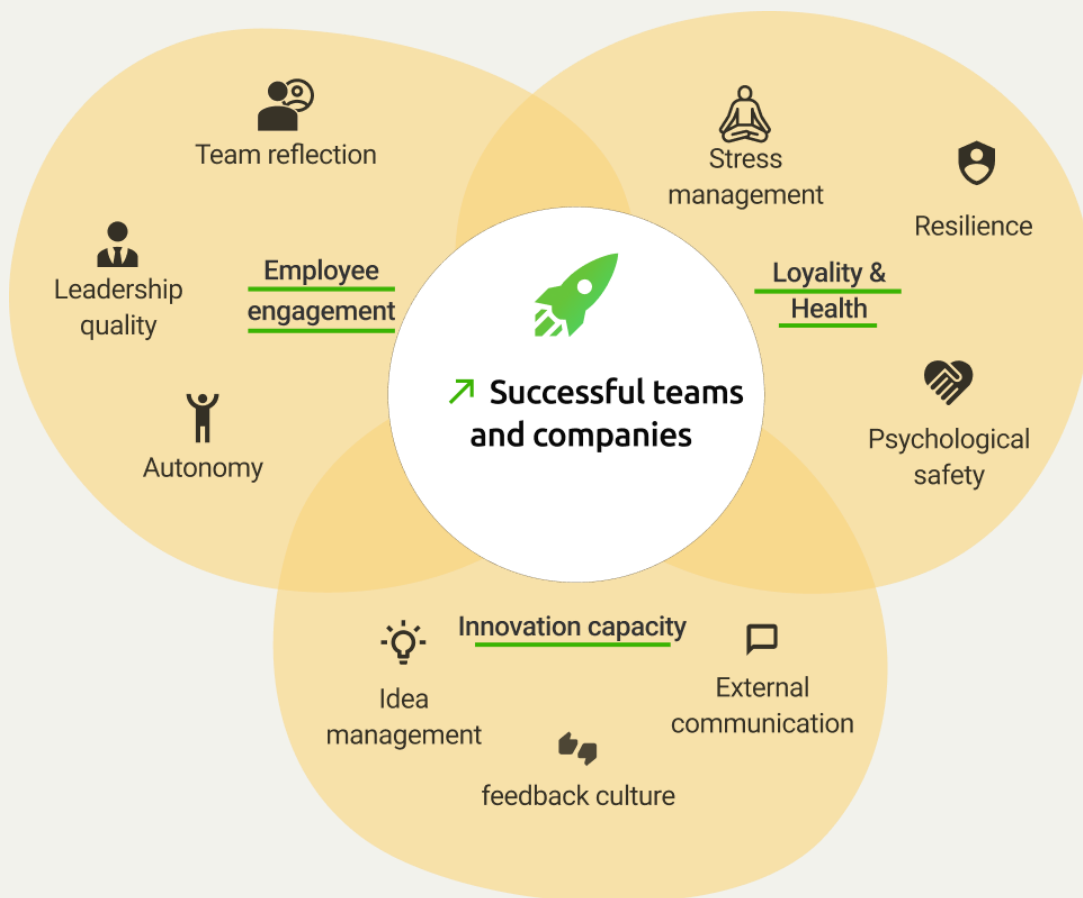
So what exactly is Echometer doing? What is the method behind it?

### **The method behind it**

Good question.

To be exact, what we did at Echometer is break down those preconditions into behavioral anchors.

For example, let us say that one precondition of “employee engagement” is “purpose”. Alright! So I will start working on that next monday, you might think.



But how? Well, looking into the Echometer tool, I know that one behavioral anchor in the context of “purpose” is (amongst others) the following sentence:

*“I have regular contact with the people who benefit from my work.”*

Okay, interesting. That is a very specific behavior I can reflect and work on with my team members. To do that in a sustainable way, we recommend the following procedure.

### **Creating sustainable continuous improvement**

One problem with many team coachings, from our point of view, is missing sustainability. You are conducting that workshop and everyone is full of energy. You are eager to work on the action items and improve the team culture.

One week later, you notice old behavior patterns in the colleague you talked to. And four weeks later, the workshop was forgotten and nothing changed.

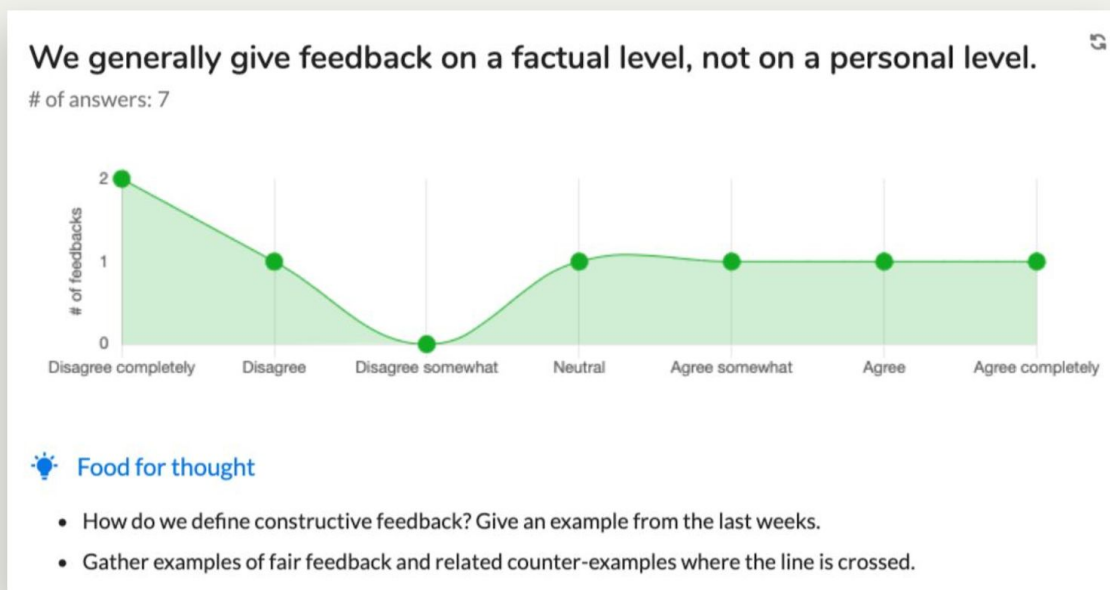


This is the reason why Echometer is not a “one-time” workshop tool. The idea behind Echometer is to conduct workshops regularly - e.g., one hour every two weeks, depending on your team size. In the context of “agile frameworks” this is called an agile retrospective.

In each workshop or retrospective with Echometer, you reflect on two things: The behavior of the team in the last weeks. E.g., what went well? What did not go well? The tool helps you to ask the right kind of questions that are rich in variety and fun.

But what you also reflect on during the workshop with Echometer is the preconditions of successful teams. Specifically, the tool asks for the perceptions of team members on the behavioral anchors I was writing about earlier.

These perceptions then serve as a basis you can reflect on during the workshop with Echometer. E.g., it looks like this in the tool.



As you can see, there is one person that disagrees with the behavioral anchor “We generally give feedback on a factual level, not on a personal level.” The others in the team mostly agree.

“What situations do you have in mind that explain these results?” the team might ask then. As you can see below in the screenshot, the tool also adds more food for thought to help to moderate the session.

The Echometer tools support during the whole workshop, beginning with helping on a smooth Check-In, prioritizing feedback, gaining insights - even in remote teams.

At the end of the workshops, it is always time to ask: What can we do about this? Which action items can we put down that we can implement? What would be an experiment, a test we could do - until the next workshop when we have a look at it again?

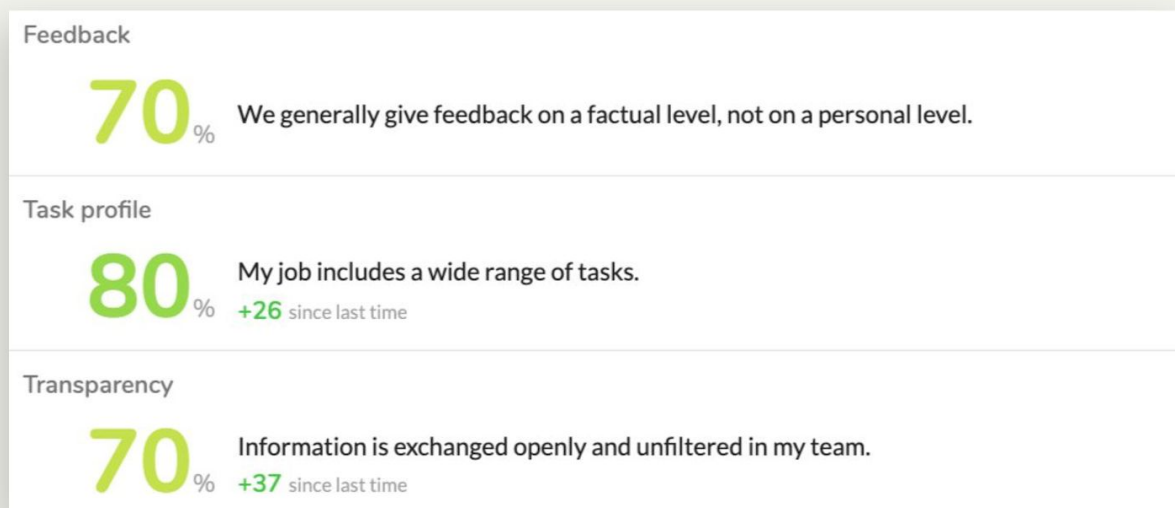
By doing that, the actual improvement process becomes reality.

### Measurability

The nice side effect of the reflection using our behavioral anchors: Your team development finally becomes measurable, as the items are numerically measured.

As Peter F. Drucker famously said: If you can't measure it, you can not improve it. Using Echometer, team development is not something "soft" anymore. It feels like finally understanding the psychological engine of the team and knowing exactly which screw to turn to become a better team.

Thus, in the next session, you can see how you as a team developed in your dashboard:



But Echometer goes even one step further. The tool asks two kinds of questions: Team and organizational questions. The latter are asked throughout the whole company or department - delivering you a constant organizational health check.

A health check that measures... the outputs of the workshops you are talking about in the workshops - Engagement, job satisfaction and so on.

You can see exactly how you develop, target your organizational interventions and can even see which teams apparently need the most support in which areas by looking at our heatmap.



The nice thing about all the behavioral anchors included in Echometer is: They are about all the topics you learned about in this eBook: Mental models, role clarity, conflict competence and so on...

Echometer focuses to bring scientific knowledge into your teams, fostering a bottom up continuous improvement. Or to look at it from a different perspective: Finally a survey where “working on the results” actually is the main part of the intervention.

# Conclusion

There are so many things you can do to develop teams and organizations. So many theories and models.

One modern, valid and insightful one is the team flow model I explained in this eBook - integrating many other models and theories.

I hope this science-based guide for practitioners was a help to bring light into darkness.

I hope it made you reflect on your methods and helped to develop your own mental models of team psychology.

And I hope that in some places of the world it prevents conflict, helps to increase the satisfaction of a team - or at least is a good read.

At the end, I would be happy if you have a look at the action items following this eBook.

# Action items after reading this eBook

- ❑ Appreciate that you have the time to read books for fun and drink a “**Fill in the drink you love**” tonight (I would go for a good old german Radler).
  
- ❑ If you have any **thoughts or feedback** feel free to write me an e-mail: [ch@echometer.de](mailto:ch@echometer.de)
  
- ❑ If you know a leader, coach, someone who is responsible for organizational development or whoever could be **interested in this eBook**, [send them this link](#) so they can download it themselves. If it only provides them with one moment of “aha”, it was worth it.
  
- ❑ **I am not angry** ( 😊 ) if you have a [look at our website](#) and try out our tool for free in a workshop with your team.

**Have a look at what  
our users say about  
the Echometer tool  
to grow your team.**