



Myers-Briggs Team-Building Workshop

An entertaining, inclusive way for employees to learn about themselves and each other, while doing the serious work of better understanding and appreciating their colleagues (and leaders) and improving their working relationships.

by Debra L. Howard

Few organizations can thrive without good teamwork and communication. But teams today can be so diverse that the words, actions, and motives of employees can easily be misinterpreted and lead to conflict instead of collaboration.

The *Myers-Briggs Team-Building Workshop* is a fun, supportive way to increase personal insight, interpersonal understanding, and team cohesion. It's based on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), a well-regarded tool that has been used for more than 50 years by organizations around the world to help people gain insight into themselves, their managers, their colleagues, and their employees.

The Myers-Briggs is a neutral, non-judgmental instrument that helps people understand their personality preferences and learn how differences between their preferences and those of other employees can sometimes result in confusion, tension, and even conflict. The MBTI doesn't limit or pigeonhole people—instead, it helps broaden their frame of reference to include others who see the world in fundamentally different ways. It shows how all of us are equally necessary, valuable, and complementary in the workplace.

WORKSHOP ELEMENTS

Before the Workshop

1 Online Assessment and Workshop Planning

All participants complete an online Myers-Briggs assessment a week before the workshop date. The instrument takes a maximum of 20 minutes to complete. I print a profile report for each participant, and based on the results, carefully group people with similar preferences together for each exercise. There are numerous small-group exercises during the workshop, so people will sit and work with (and get to know better) many different colleagues during the day.

The Morning of the Workshop

2 Fun, Illuminating Exercises

Four dimensions are covered by the Myers-Briggs: how we prefer to interact with others, how we gather information, how we make decisions, and how we approach our work. The first half of the workshop uses entertaining, small-group exercises to teach



people about each dimension. As participants build a hypothesis of their Myers-Briggs type, they are interacting, and often laughing, with their colleagues about the different ways they see the world and engage with each other.

A Working Lunch

3 Private Type Validation

Just before lunch, I hand out the profile reports that resulted from the online assessment each participant took before the workshop. Over lunch, participants privately compare their profile report to the hypothesis they built during the morning about their Myers-Briggs type. Each participant also receives a booklet with detailed type descriptions to read and compare. While participants are reading these and thinking about their type, I walk around the room and answer any questions people have, and offer additional questions and observations to help those who are on the fence about one or more of the four dimensions. By the end of the lunch break, most, if not all, of the participants have decided which type best describes them.

After Lunch

4 What Does This Mean for the Team?

After lunch, we look at the distribution of preferences in the team or organization, and discuss how group dynamics, work norms, and interpersonal communication can be better understood through the Myers-Briggs lens. We ask the participants where they are seeing impatience, misunderstanding, or conflict, and brainstorm together how to improve these areas of tension. We write on flip charts everyone's ideas and suggestions, and, finally, ask each person to document (privately) one or more actions they are willing to take to improve their interactions with their colleagues.

After the Workshop

5 Type Table and Tips

After the workshop, I e-mail a short workbook to the group that includes a table with the four-letter type of everyone who volunteered to share it, and that documents the discussion about how to work together more effectively.

WORKSHOP BENEFITS

People leave the workshop with a deeper understanding of themselves and their teammates. They learn how to better contribute their gifts to the team, and how to encourage others to “round out” the strengths of the group. And they leave with more patience and acceptance of the differences of others, often with a smile on their face in appreciation of how humorous these differences can seem when viewed in a more positive context.

EXAMPLES

For instance, a team from a policy advocacy nonprofit was struggling with setting and meeting deadlines. The Myers-Briggs Team-Building Workshop revealed that only two team members preferred an orderly, predictable approach to projects and deadlines; the rest of the team preferred a more flexible, last-minute approach. This explained—and gave us the tools to improve—this team's challenge with completing projects on time.

In another example, the Myers-Briggs Team-Building Workshop revealed that one of the reasons an insurance company department was having so much trouble with its manager was that the majority of the team members preferred the “feeling” dimension, while their boss preferred the “thinking” dimension,



which made her seem coldly dispassionate to her employees, and even critical at times. Understanding these differences helped the team and manager adopt new strategies to reduce the tension they had been experiencing.

The workshop also helped the partners of a successful law firm understand how their different preferences for facts and details (sensing) and the big picture (intuition) were contributing to frequent conflicts both among them and between them and their staff. It was a smart and spirited group, and there was much laughter as they told stories about each other to illustrate their differences. The events and conversations described in the stories had previously been sources of confusion and irritation, but were reinterpreted during the workshop as reasonable, predictable, and not intended to upset others.

APPLICATIONS

Those are just three examples; the workshop has also helped a broad spectrum of businesses and nonprofits with:

- Problem solving
- Planning and project management
- Interpersonal and team communication
- Conflict management
- Delegation
- Feedback
- Innovation
- Selling and persuasive influence
- Collaboration
- Management and leadership development

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

This is one of the few workshops available that is appropriate for employees at all levels of an organization. It also accommodates people who have reporting relationships—and even encourages them to attend the workshop together. For instance, it can be helpful if a manager is in the same workshop with his or her employees. Intact teams, departments, and divisions can participate, as can employees who barely know each other. Small teams benefit as much as medium-sized and large groups. This flexibility enables the Myers-Briggs Team-Building Workshop to fit into almost any professional development curriculum.

This workshop is best for teams or organizations with moderate to high levels of trust. Teams with serious conflicts, fear, or distrust should do some conflict resolution and/or trust-building work beforehand.





About the Workshop Leader

Debra Howard founded her consulting business in 1991. She specializes in executive coaching for managers and leaders, organizational assessment and redesign for accelerating growth, and action-packed training for improving team and individual effectiveness.

Ms. Howard is certified in the Myers-Briggs Step I and Step II, and has received advanced training in the FIRO-B personality preference instrument. Her Myers-Briggs Team-Building Workshop is based on the work of Joan Wofford, a gifted trainer and Myers-Briggs practitioner who developed and refined her workshop design during a successful 40-year career as a trainer and consultant.