

## **Team Dynamics**

Team Dynamics are the unseen forces that operate in a team between different people or groups. Team Dynamics can strongly influence how a team reacts, behaves or performs, and the effects of team dynamics are often very complex. This page considers what team dynamics are and the impact they have on the team.



**The rope represents unseen dynamics**

Suppose in a small team of six people working in one office there are two people who have a particularly strong friendship. This friendship is a "natural force" that may have an influence on the rest of the team, and can be manifest in various ways, either positively or negatively.

Other factors can also play an influence. For example, if a wall of cupboards were to be placed across the middle of the office, this would also form a 'natural force' that influences the communication flow and may separate the group into two further sub-groups.

Sometimes, an "absence" of a natural force can also be a team dynamic. For example, if the leader or manager is permanently removed from the office, the group may be drawn into a change of behaviour.

### **How do you recognise team dynamics?**

You can recognise team dynamics by looking for the forces that influence team behaviour. These forces might include:

- Personality styles (eg: including or excluding people)
- Team Roles (eg: see [MTR-i team dynamics](#))
- Office layout (eg: cupboards dividing teams into two)
- Tools and technology (eg: email, bulletin board, information pool enabling hidden communication).
- Organisational culture (eg: company cars acting as status symbols to separate groups of employees)
- Processes/methodologies/procedures (eg: problem-solving methodology)
- etc.

You can identify personality-based dynamics by completing our online [Team Dynamics Assessment](#).

## How can team dynamics be managed constructively?

You need to:

- a. look for the team dynamics - the 'natural forces' at play
- b. determine whether they are acting for good or ill,
- c. make interventions to make the effect of those dynamics more positive.

For example, if a wall of cupboards is inhibiting communication within a group, that wall can be repositioned and the room layout designed to encourage communication (without making the environment too uncomfortable for those who value their privacy when working on individual tasks).

### Example: The impact of a friendship

The positive effect of a strong friendship in a team might be:

- the friends communicate a lot together...
- ...which naturally results in other members being drawn into the discussion
- ...which results in a good 'social' feel to the group
- ...which makes people enjoy being in the group
- ...which improves motivation and commitment

The negative effect of a strong friendship might be:

- to cause the other four people to feel excluded...
- ...which means they are less likely to include the two friends in decision making
- ...which means that there are likely to be two sub-groups
- ...which means that information may not flow across the whole group, but only within the subgroups
- ...which means that miscommunication may lead to misunderstanding and poor collective performance

This friendship has an impact on the group's performance, and is therefore a team dynamic. Whether it is good or bad depends on other factors. In the first, positive, example, there is a natural force of "inclusion" which results in people being drawn into productive discussions. In the second, negative example, there is a natural force of "exclusion" which results in communication between groups being stifled.

