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Blog post for a company providing teambuilding consultations. No SEO optimization.

Your team has a shape – the sociometry of teambuilding

“Personality hires” done wrong

Being a “personality hire” has become something of a meme in the recent years. This term is understood as somebody outgoing, extraverted, who cheers up the team and makes everybody more motivated. Maybe in some cases this definition is true, but for most of them being a personality hire is either a label adopted due to impostor syndrome,¹ or a role somebody is trying to impersonate (hence the meme-ification of the term). Despite those different interpretations, one thing remains true – personality still matters in the hiring process.

Research has shown that HR employees and hiring managers tend to favor employees who are extraverted and outgoing, because their personalities closely resemble the candidates.² This ongoing trend has been heavily criticized for various reasons. Scholars argue that those practices are discriminative acts against meritocracy and violations of core ideas of employment ethics. Others note that hiring based on personality reinforces gender inequality in the workplace.^{3 4} We propose another argument against the affinity bias – it damages the performance of your team.

The shape of your team

Structuralist scholars believe that our social life can be pictured as a complicated network of entities influencing one another in various ways. To them, this is true not only on the national or global level, but also in our closest groups – families, communities and yes, your teams too. Those structures are created through repeated patterns of communication and teamwork – not only how often it happens, but how does it happen.⁵ To depict those

¹ Berwick, I; 2024. [*Transcript: Is 'personality' a good enough reason to hire someone?*](#) Financial Times.

² Räsänen, J; Lippert-Rasmussen, K; 2024. *Personality Discrimination and the Wrongness of Hiring Based on Extraversion*. Journal of Business Ethics. **195** (3)

³ Kubiak E; Efremova MI; Baron S; Frasca KJ; 2023. *Gender equity in hiring: examining the effectiveness of a personality-based algorithm*. Front Psychol.

⁴ Chen, C; 2023. *A Review Examining Biases in Workplace Hiring and Promotion Processes*. Senior Thesis.

⁵ Giddens, A; 2004. *Sociology*. Warsaw, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.

structures, microsociologists have developed various tools over the years and called them **sociometry**. Sounds serious, right?

Three key elements that constitute a **sociometric structure** of your team are **cohesion, similarity and interpersonal attractiveness**. Let's quickly examine each of them.

- Cohesion, in this case, means – how well do the members of your team understand how it works. Do they understand the hierarchy and chain of command? Do they know who does what? Do they all subscribe to the goal your team needs to achieve? Or maybe there are some misunderstandings in division of tasks, or is the goal not as clear for everybody as it should be?
- Similarity can be understood in a straightforward way. It stands for the traits your team members share, such as age, skillset, interests and positions. However, a high similarity is not always a good thing! While people who share many traits will form deeper relations and build a team spirit quicker, teams less like each other tend to divide tasks better and come up with better solutions due to the difference in viewpoints.
- Finally, interpersonal attractiveness is the pattern of **choices and rejections** your team members make on an interpersonal level. Who eats lunch with whom? Which people work together more often than others? Those patterns can tell you a lot about the dynamic of your team and the way your team members think.⁶

Why does it all matter?

I'm sure some of you are yawning after this lecture, but please, bear with me, because this information can help you become a better team leader. Understanding the inner workings of your team and the dispositions of each team member can be crucial when **dividing tasks, forming smaller groups and resolving conflicts**. It can help you plan ahead and **do personality hiring the right way**. For example, if you can tell your team struggles to stay focused on tasks and prefers small talk instead – hire somebody who will counter that and keep the workflow on track. On the other hand, when your team members have trouble forming bonds, having the information about their similarities can help you team-

⁶ Szmatka, J; 2006. *Małe struktury społeczne*. Warsaw, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.

build more effectively. Overall, the benefits of truly understanding the relationships within your team are immense and can be the make or break of your next project.

Our company can help you get to know your team better. We offer a variety of services ranging from the **sociometry diagnosis** for your team to **team-building consultations** and **guidance** on how to form a better team. If you're interested, leave your e-mail address in the box below! Together, we can ensure the smooth running of your team.