

TLP Five-Minute Read Over Coffee – What makes a good team?



What are the essential qualities that make a good team? A question I have explored with lots of different clients in 2023. It triggered interesting debates, a few surprises and a rich exploration of language.

I have summarized outputs from these workshops into three groups:

1)The superpowers

Qualities viewed as essential. What was interesting was that many of the most important qualities are quiet superpowers that can sometimes go unnoticed/or taken for granted.

- **Reliable (dependable, trustworthy, consistent 'a rock').** You are there for your team each day and every day. You are **professional** and produce a consistently high quality of work.

- **Efficient (productive).** You work quickly while maintaining a high quality of output.
- **Organized (structured, methodical).** Participants agreed that this quality was absolutely vital for the success of the team.
- **Collaborative (team-player).** You work well with your colleagues. You are open to ideas, receptive to feedback and focused on the team and not just your own needs/interests. Participants also highlighted the importance of colleagues who were **humble** and **'down to earth'**, who lacked pretention or ego. Humour was also considered important, in particular when teams were under pressure.
- **Respectful (considerate).** Another quality that was highly valued and viewed as essential to a sense of wellbeing within the team.
- **Motivated (enthusiastic).** You bring positive energy and pride to the work you do.

2)The surprises

These were qualities that I really value but triggered some very interesting discussions and challenges.

- **Authentic.** How much of yourself can you/should you bring into the workplace? It is easy to say that good teams rely on authenticity but the debate around this quality was more nuanced. While most participants valued authenticity - they highlighted the dangers of being too **honest, naive** and conversely the need to be **political, considered, diplomatic** at times.
- **Hardworking.** I will admit to being a fan of this quality. However, a lot of my clients questioned whether this was in fact a 'quality'. My clients contrasted this with **'efficient'**. Many clients were also proud of their work-life balance and were simply not willing to do 'crazy hours' for their company.
- **Passionate.** Again, this is a word that I really like. The idea that you care deeply about what you do. However, again many clients made a distinction between being **motivated** and **passionate**. They reserved the use of 'passionate' for family, friends and outside interests! They also highlighted the difference between turning up, being professional and taking pride in the quality of your work - with the idea that you needed to feel a deep emotional connection to your job.

3) The big No No's

Three aspects of human character that were considered very damaging to the health of a team.

- **Arrogant (egotistical/self-important/conceited).** You have an over-inflated sense of your value to the team!
- **Stubborn (obstinate/headstrong/pig-headed/rigid).** You are determined not to change your attitude or position on something.
- **Disorganised (chaotic, messy, unorganised).** A number of participants highlighted very charismatic colleagues who struggled with doing the simple things well and on time - often resulting in delays and mistakes for all the team!
- **Two-faced (superficial, hypocritical, insincere, fake, back-stabbing!).** While recognizing the need not to show everything at work, my participants really did not like those people they simply felt they could not trust!

I hope that is useful and wish you all a good continuation of the week.
