

Team Intelligence (TI)

By
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“Individually we are but one drop if water. Together we can be an ocean.” ~ Ryunosuke Satoro, Japanese writer.

Team intelligence is a good example of one of the main tenants of the *Gestalt Psychology Principle* as a verb in action. Here we have a team’s collective intelligence, having the potential for accomplishing much more together than any of its individual members can working alone. Today, success in any public, private or non-profit organization requires high functioning team intelligence. Below are the seven main elements of team intelligence, defined further by their descriptive behaviors.

1. Communication.

Team communication behaviors that raise the team IQ include:

- Practicing a supportive communication tone by purposely conveying equality, freedom, acceptance, tentativeness, sensitivity, and spontaneity; avoiding conveyance of qualities that lead to defensiveness, such as judgment, superiority, certainty, manipulation, control, and indifference.
- Following the 7 Cs of good communication—being clear, concise, concrete, complete, correct, considerate and courteous.
- Using active *two-eared listening* (what is said or not said; what is said and how it is said) to understand fully before responding.
- Understanding communication is a road always under construction, needing continuous improvement.
- Remembering that other people pay more attention to how you make them feel, rather than hearing what you know.

2. Emotional and Social Intelligence.

These team behaviors include:

- Developing emotional awareness of self and others.
- Practicing self-regulation, empathy, intrinsic motivation, and interpersonal social skills.
- Being willing to confront conflicts and disagreements assertively, seeing these events as opportunities to grow, rather than situations to fear or avoid.
- Having a positive, hopeful and optimistic perspective of life and people.
- Self-accepting and becoming more who you are as opposed to who you think others want you to be.

3. Cognition.

The necessary cognitive behaviors of team intelligence are:

- Having an acute awareness of the natural cognitive biases we all have that can taint the truth of something.
- Using critical thinking to verify assumptions, complete half-truths and ask good questions.
- Staying mindful of what is presently going on now and avoiding mind wandering of past memories or future expectations.
- Being open-minded, flexible and adaptable to changing priorities and conditions.
- Focusing on the purpose of what you are doing.

4. Coachability.

Behaviors that demonstrate the quality of this factor include:

- Realizing even your sacred knowledge may be worth re-visiting or at least questioning.
- Being a perpetual student willing to learn new ideas, perspectives and ways of thinking.
- Separating the few compelling convictions, which you hold close to your heart from all the tentative beliefs you have in your mind.
- Being open to receiving feedback about needed improvement.
- Being brave, safe and confident enough to share your vulnerabilities and weaknesses.

5. Diversity.

Diversity behaviors that help improve team intelligence are:

- Living an organic, learning and inclusive culture consistently every day.
- Valuing diverse individual differences that offer a full menu of different perspectives and values.
- Feeling included, having a sense of belonging and being comfortable in making contributions.
- Practicing diversity because it is the right thing to do, apart from being a popular or unpopular political ploy.
- Creating a harmonious environment with meaningful diversity, equality and inclusion.

6. Problem-solving.

Here are the problem-solving behaviors that increase team intelligence:

- Embracing mistakes and failures, not as fatal but rather as opportunities to learn how to succeed.
- Collaborating actively in using different strategies or different perspectives in solving problems.
- Focusing on problems that are both important and urgent.
- Breaking down complex problems into smaller, more manageable parts.
- Knowing when a problem is not solvable, but just manageable.

7. Leadership

Leadership behaviors that lead to high team intelligence are:

- Sharing leadership and decision-making throughout the team, according to expertise rather than hierarchy and position.
- Being highly motivated, energized and engaged with the organization's mission, goals and values.
- Understanding and having enthusiasm with roles and deliverables.
- Being trustworthy, trusting, and inspiring.
- Aligning congruently and consistently with the organization's mission, goals and core values.

“If you take out the team in teamwork, it's just work. Now who wants that?” ~Matthew Woodring Stover, American novelist.

Team Intelligence Assessment Instrument

Directions: Carefully read the behaviors under each main factor related to the current level of your team's collective intelligence and then rate each behavior according to your perception, from the 1-5 scale on the right. Do this by placing an X under the rating on the right that represents your most accurate assessment as to the frequency of the behavior, according to the scale below. Then when you are finished, score and interpret your assessment using the key at the end.

Rating Scale

1 = Hardly ever 2 = Seldom 3 = Half the time 4 = Most of the time 5 = Always

Factor	Behavior Description	1	2	3	4	5
Communication	Team members listen actively and understand each other before responding.					

Diversity	The team is made up of diverse perspectives from different ages, genders, ethnicity, personalities, cultures, knowledge and other individual differences.					
	Everyone feels included and comfortable in contributing ideas and points of view in discussions.					
	A harmonious environment is obvious with diversity, equality and inclusion.					
	DEI is practiced because it is the right thing to do, rather than being a popular or unpopular political ploy.					
Problem-solving	Team members actively collaborate with each other's perspectives on solving problems.					
	The team adjusts quickly when priorities or conditions change.					
	The team focuses on problems that are most important and urgent.					
	Complex problems are broken down into more manageable parts.					
	Some problems are viewed as virtually unsolvable, but at least manageable.					
Leadership	Leadership and decision-making is shared according to expertise, rather than position.					
	Team members are highly motivated, energized and engaged with the organization's mission and goal.					
	Each member understands and is enthusiastic in their roles and deliverables.					
	There is an abundance of trust and inspiration present.					
	Team members are comfortable switching between leading and following.					

Scoring and Interpretation

Step 1: Add the scores for all 35 items (maximum = 175). Step 2: Divide by 35 to get your Team Intelligence (TI) — a score between 1.0 and 5.0.

TI Range	Interpretation	Description
4.5 – 5.0	Exceptional	Highly intelligent, adaptive, and collaborative team culture.
3.8 – 4.4	Strong	Solid teamwork with minor improvement areas.

3.0 – 3.7	Moderate	Functioning team, but some weaknesses in communication, trust, or alignment.
2.0 – 2.9	Developing	Struggling with cohesion, leadership clarity, or emotional safety.
1.0 – 1.9	At Risk	Low team intelligence — systemic communication and trust breakdowns.

Dr. Bill Cottringer is author of several business and self-development books, including, *Re-Braining for 2000* (MJR Publishing); *The Prosperity Zone* (Authorlink Press); *You Can Have Your Cheese & Eat It Too* (Executive Excellence); *The Bow-Wow Secrets* (Wisdom Tree); *Do What Matters Most* and *“P” Point Management* (Atlantic Book Publishers); *Reality Repair* (Global Vision Press), *Reality Repair Rx* (Publish America); *Critical Thinking* (Authorsden); *Thoughts on Happiness*, *Pearls of Wisdom: A Dog’s Tale* (Covenant Books, Inc.). Coming soon: *A Cliché a day will keep the Vet Away* and *Christian Psychology for Everyday Use* (Covenant Books, Inc.). Bill can be reached for comments or questions at (206)-914-1863 or ckuretdoc@comcast.net.