



Strength Deployment
Inventory.



The ROI of Building Strong Workplace Relationships

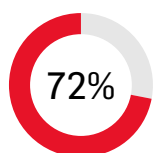
By Tim Scudder and Michael L. Patterson

EVERY SO OFTEN, SOMETHING SEISMIC HAPPENS TO THE WAY WE WORK.

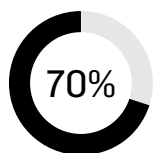
The global pandemic sparked a sudden shift, launching what became the biggest experiment in the history of work—the hybrid revolution.

A 2022 Microsoft Work Trend study¹ found that most organisations said hybrid work is here to stay permanently, and employees had embraced the flexibility it offers. That remains true even today. While some organisations have pushed for a return to office life in the years since, many have landed on a hybrid model—a blend of in-office days and remote flexibility.

Yet, despite its advantages, hybrid work has introduced new challenges. The most common being the ability to build social capital and trust among teammates with less frequent in-person interactions.



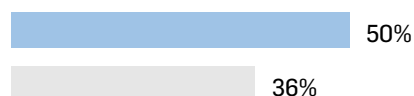
Of organisations say hybrid work is here to **stay permanently**



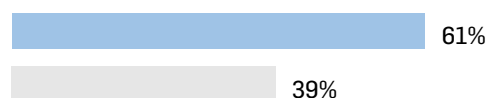
Of employees say **lack of connection** is the #1 challenge of hybrid teamwork

The same study found that productivity and retention are much higher among employees who have thriving relationships at work. Teams with strong relationships trust each other, commit to their goals, and stay with the organisation longer than the rest.

More productive at work compared to a year ago



Intend to stay at employer for one year



■ Respondents with **thriving** relationships ■ Respondents with **struggling** relationships

¹2022 Microsoft Work Trend Index Research of 31,000 people in 31 countries

The ROI of relationships in hybrid and fully remote teams couldn't be clearer.

If organisations are to thrive, they need to help teams foster connection with colleagues—many of whom have never met face to face. That includes managing misunderstandings and inevitable conflicts. A good starting point would be personality assessments oriented toward relationships, replacing the dominant individualist approaches. People can work together productively over time by understanding how their personalities align (or contrast) with their colleagues. With this inter-personalised insight, they can adjust how they approach each other for better results. We call this relationship intelligence.

“When people trust one another and have social capital, you get a willingness to take risks. You get more innovation and creativity and less groupthink.”

Nancy Baym

Principal Researcher, Microsoft Research



MAKING COLLABORATION WORK



Plenty has been written on the virtues and challenges of collaboration with people of diverse perspectives. Innovating with colleagues who force you outside your preconceived ideas is easier. But one thing is clear: different perspectives also bring a greater risk of conflict.

You can't see what your colleague is talking about because you approach an issue from different starting points. Both of you are likely to be blind to the sensitivities of the other—and inevitably inflame those sensitivities. If collaboration is going to work, people must keep those problems from undermining collaboration. They have to learn to prevent or manage conflict, so it doesn't jeopardise the relationship.

We've learnt from psychological research that there's no such thing as a common or objective point of view. Everyone comes with particular concerns and biases that shape their perspective, which are hard to change. It's more productive to work with people's tendencies than to roll over them with your point of view. Psychologists have also explained that conflict comes when people feel their sources of well-being are under threat. What makes conflict hard to manage is that people have different sources of well-being. We can divide them accordingly into three primary sources.

Three Primary Motivations

Colleagues who are most concerned with how they're treating those around them; they tend to be supportive and trusting.	Colleagues who are all about action; they feel best when they're accomplishing tasks and achieving results.	Colleagues who like to think through challenges and keep things orderly; they're systematic and reserved.
PEOPLE	PERFORMANCE	PROCESS

Performance-oriented people tend to get stuck in conflict less often with colleagues who are equally action-oriented. They might butt heads in constant competition for authority, but they understand where these colleagues are coming from. The process and people-oriented types tend to drive them crazy because in their view, those colleagues appear to keep putting up roadblocks to success. And vice versa: performance-oriented people appear chaotic and insensitive to the other types. Short story: everyone struggles to work with people with different personalities.

Some people have a mix of all three tendencies, which makes them helpful hubs of collaboration. But effective organisations still need to harness the energies of full-throttle directive, analytical, and supportive people.

WHAT YOU MEASURE IS WHAT YOU GET

We've just sketched out a simplified version of the Strength Deployment Inventory® (SDI®), a personality assessment geared to providing self-awareness and building relationships.

Most companies use assessments geared to individual traits, such as CliftonStrengths, Myers-Briggs, and DiSC. Those approaches have been around for decades, but they took off in the 1990s with a bold new framing: Instead of helping employees fix or improve their weaknesses, organisations should help employees boost their strengths. With that new approach, HR's talent management took off. After all, most people resist correction but welcome support in getting better at what they already like to do.

The trouble is that by telling people to focus on their strengths, we direct their energies inward toward discovering and developing themselves. That often leaves little energy for the hard work of understanding and adapting to others—which is essential for collaboration. Also, some strengths might work well for individual work but get in the way of a good work relationship.



IT'S TIME TO SHIFT THE EMPHASIS



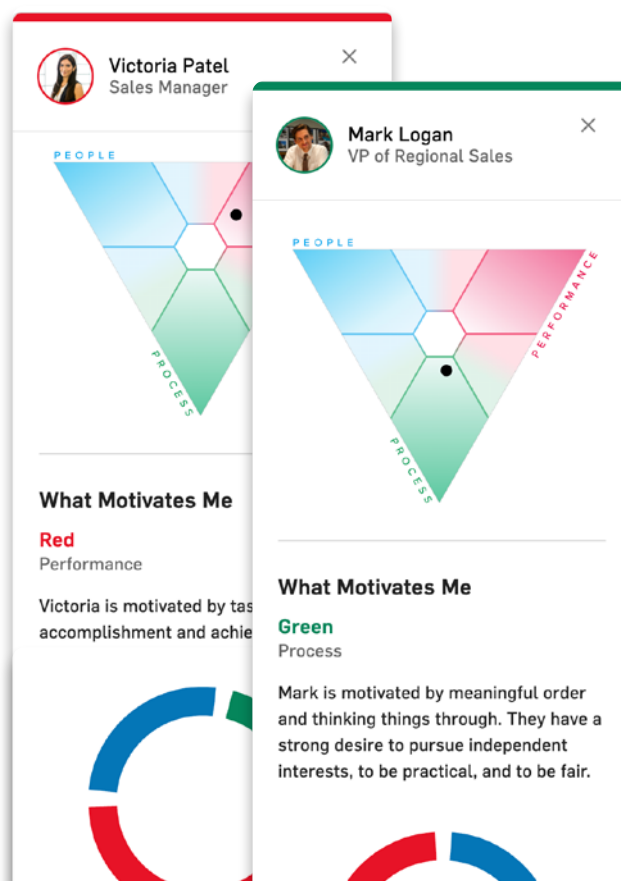
We're not necessarily suggesting we go back to the old days of correcting people's weaknesses. We still need to value people's strengths because those strengths flow from our underlying motives or what makes us feel good about ourselves. But we need to remind people that their colleagues (or clients) have different strengths, and those strengths are likely to conflict if everyone pushes hard on their favourite capacity.

We need something similar to what has happened in the area of intelligence testing. For decades, companies have focused on rational, analytical intelligence measured by classic IQ tests. But in recent years, we've learnt that there are several kinds of intelligence. Emotional Intelligence—the awareness of one's own emotional state and those of others—has come to the forefront, with a strong foundation in scholarship. It lends itself better to relationships than IQ itself.

In theory, an organisation could adopt multiple assessments to show various personality characteristics. But that's impractical for all but the most talent-obsessed workplaces. Many HR managers we talk to say they have enough trouble getting people to complete a single assessment.

That's why organisations that want to improve collaboration among teams should move from individualist assessments and shift to one that is relationship-based. Doing so will send a strong message: We want you to not only develop your own strengths but also help the team's capacity to work effectively together. As your work shifts from individual production to team-based collaboration, you'll have insight into your teammates' personalities and motives, which can help you adjust your approach to foster more productive interactions and strengthen collaboration when needed. You can still be the same person, but you may find yourself drawing on different strengths rather than relying on your usual go-to traits.

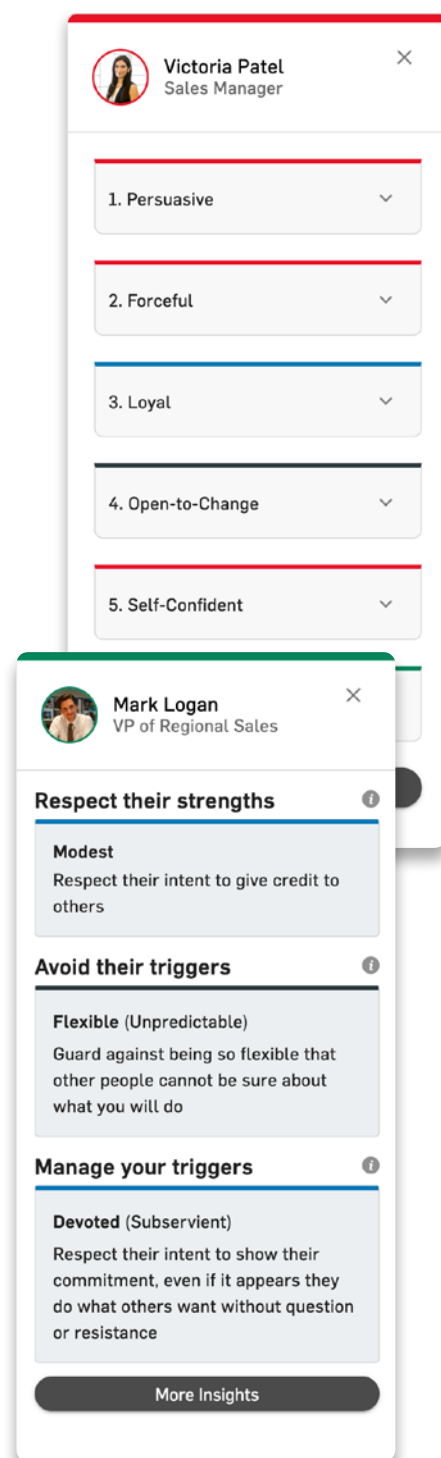
Take the example of a hard-driving sales manager continually butting heads with her regional sales VP. With the SDI, the sales manager might realise she is geared toward performance, while her boss is most concerned with process. With this knowledge of her motives and those of her boss, she can adjust her approach to delivering presentations that better match her VP's tendencies, especially as conflict is brewing. In doing so, she makes conflict less likely while advancing future projects.



RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING AT SCALE

Simplicity is one reason that individualist assessments have endured. People can focus on understanding and improving themselves; they don't have to know anyone else's motivations. Calibrating your interactions with colleagues is hard to pull off if you don't know where your colleagues are coming from. After all, people don't wear badges describing their personalities.

Fortunately, we have something better. The SDI Platform is available on any device and is integrated into collaboration software like Microsoft Outlook, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and Slack—enabling people to see the motives and strengths of their colleagues who have taken the SDI assessment. Suppose you're about to join a team on a challenging project or go into a tense meeting. You can now get personalised communication tips to help you listen for intent, consider diverse perspectives, or know what to say when emotions run high. Now, all that assessment insight is no longer sitting on a shelf somewhere, it's impacting conversations and helping teams make better decisions in real-time.

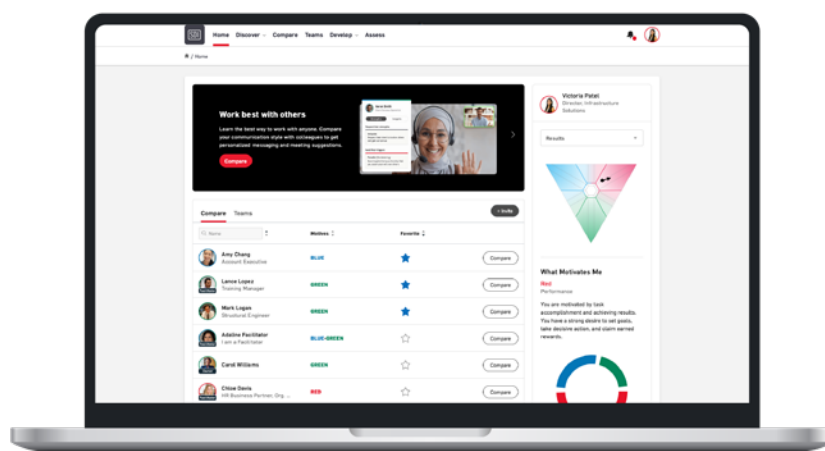


Collaboration as an energiser

As people realise the growing importance of collaboration, they'll be eager to offer even more detail on the assessments. With growing use, the apps—and the people—will get better and better. Instead of being painful for some people, collaboration might even become energising.



Assessments geared towards relationships can give organisations a vital foundation of awareness and tools to help people put relationship intelligence into practise. As people see the benefits of adjusting their approach to make interactions more effective with colleagues, they'll be more willing to reveal their personalities upfront. And thanks to our SDI integrations, relationship intelligence is no longer a concept. It's a skill that can be improved with support tools to help teams connect, communicate, and conquer anything together.



Learn More

The SDI is a personality assessment that provides insights about people's motives, strengths, and how they experience conflict to help them better understand themselves and how they relate to others. It also provides insights about the motives and strengths of their peers. These insights help teams improve communication, collaboration, leadership, inclusion, and virtually all aspects of work that involve interpersonal interactions.

Get Started

To bring the SDI to your organisation, contact us. Call **1-800-449-5989** or visit us at **CrucialLearning.com**.





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