Contents

Introduction

T eams are a critical component of the modern workplace. To be effective, we must increase our awareness of how we like to work in teams and what challenges this type of work setting presents. The *Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation–Behavior*™ (FIRO-B®) instrument has been used for decades to increase individual awareness, and this guide takes the next step in applying the assessment to the individual experience in team situations. A separate individual interpretation of your FIRO-B results is not necessary to benefit from this guide, but if you become curious about other applications, please consult the References and Resources or arrange for a private interpretation with a personal coach, counselor, or training and development professional.

Purpose of This Guide

The purpose of this guide is to help you use results from the FIRO-B instrument to understand how you function in team settings. The focus is on you "inside a team," and what you may experience when working in teams. Less attention is given to looking at the team as a whole from the perspective of a team leader or of someone outside the team who is interested in making it work more effectively.

The sections of this guide are intended to provide you with several benefits:

- Awareness of your overall orientation to working in teams

- An understanding of how you are likely to handle team leadership

- Exploration of how you match up with different types of individuals and team climates

- Insight into how you might handle difficult team situations

- Improvement of your ability to diagnose difficulties you are experiencing in teams

- Tips on how you can become more effective in team settings

Please note that this guide is *not* intended to do the following:

1. Provide an assessment of your individual effectiveness in or value to a team

2. Measure your abilities or capacity for leading a team

3. Suggest that teams should be designed solely on the basis of interpersonal orientation

4. Include a means to measure the health of any particular team

5. Present ways to completely prevent or resolve problems within a specific team

Defining Teams

The word *team* denotes a group of people working together toward a common goal. However, it does not necessarily indicate *how* the individuals are working together. For example, the word *team* can be used to describe

- A large number of people spread out over many locations (for example, the "sales team")

- A category of people doing the same type of work in one location (for example, the "customer service team")

- People working in a loosely coordinated way across different locations (for example, a "virtual team")

- A specific work unit or people with the same supervisor (for example, the "marketing research team," the "management team" for the division)

- People assigned to a committee or task force and asked to accomplish something (for example, the "new product team," the "quality improvement team")

This guide is oriented to situations in which you are working with others around a common task, such as in a project team or your everyday work group. Such situations most likely involve smaller "teams" of 5 to 12 people. These individuals may not be working in a teamlike manner and may in fact be functioning in ways that corrode a feeling of "team." Your use of this guide indicates an interest in understanding how to function best in a collection of individuals so that a sense of "team" might be achieved.

How to Use This Guide

Throughout this guide, you will find interpretive text, examples, and activities that apply to important issues in team settings. These materials will help link your FIRO-B results to actual experiences you may be having in teams. A small graphic at the beginning of each section shows, using shaded boxes, which FIRO-B score(s) will be most relevant. This guide is designed to meet many different purposes. For example,

- If you are in a training program in preparation for being on a project team, you may want to focus on Part One.

- If you are participating in a leadership training program, you may want to focus on Part Two.

- If you are a counselor working with a team conflict, you may want to focus on Part Three.

- If you are a consultant working to improve team dynamics, you may want to focus on Parts Four and Five.

- If you are a team member trying to help improve your team, you may want to focus on Parts Three and Five.

If you need to address a specific concern about working in a team, consult Table 1 so that you can emphasize the most relevant sections.

Attached to the back cover you will find a foldout summary card where you can record basic FIRO-B results and key issues for your development. You will find instructions for what to record in special "SUMMARY CARD" boxes interspersed throughout the text. See Section 15, "Summary and Action Plan," to learn how you might use what you have learned to become more effective in teams.

The suggestions and interpretations presented here are offered as starting points, a set of hypo-theses about your interpersonal orientation in teams. While the FIRO-B instrument is a powerful assessment tool supported by years of research and theoretical development, it cannot explain all aspects of complex human behavior. Only you can verify the statements here and determine how well they describe you.

Background on the FIRO-B® Instrument

The letters in the acronym FIRO-B stand for *Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation–Behavior*™. The FIRO-B instrument was originally developed to predict how military personnel would

TABLE 1: ADDRESSING SPECIFIC CONCERNS ABOUT WORKING IN TEAMS

My Concern	Possible Help from Section/Activity	Page
Avoiding or resisting team situations or being criticized by others for being a "loner"	My Preferences About Working in Teams My Reactions to Team Mismatches	11 34
Shifting from a job as an individual contributor to one in a team-based setting	My Preferences About Working in Teams Aspects of a Team Most Important to Me	11 14
Choosing among different teams to find the best fit for my working style	Part One: Interpersonal Orientation in Teams	11
Experiencing strong differences with others about what a good team "should" be like	Aspects of a Team Most Important to Me My Likely Complaints About Team Climate	14 40
Desiring to experiment with new ways of working in a team	My Team Role Potential	16
Leading a team for the first time	Part Two: Team Leadership and Decision Making	19
Leading a team that may be too slow, hesitant, and not self-starting	My Initiation and Visibility as Leader Contributions and Challenges in Team Decision Making	19 26
Leading a team that may be overactive and unfocused	My Initiation and Visibility as Leader	19
Having difficulty relying on others in a team	My Initiation and Visibility as Leader My Reactions to Team Mismatches	19 34
Taking over a team from another leader	My Leadership Foundation Team Transitions	22 47
Experiencing resistance by team members to my leadership	My Leadership Foundation	22
Gauging how I relate to others in the leadership role	My Leadership Foundation	22
Being seen as too open or too selective with sharing information	Challenges I May Face in the Decision-Making Process My Reactions to Team Mismatches	28 34
Having difficulty getting my team to take up topics for discussion	My Initiation and Visibility as Leader Challenges I May Face in the Decision-Making Process	19 28
Experiencing continued tension with one or two individuals on my team	Team Chemistry	31
Feeling frustrated with cliques and subgroups on my team	Team Chemistry Consequences of Team Member Mismatches	31 37
Being on a team that has reached a plateau and needs to go on to the next level	My Likely Complaints About Team Climate Team Development	40 43
Experiencing accusations of being secretive and withholding	My Likely Complaints About Team Climate Contributions and Challenges in Team Decision Making My Reactions to Team Mismatches	40 26 34

TABLE 3: POTENTIAL TEAM BEHAVIORS FOR EXPRESSED INCLUSION, CONTROL, AND AFFECTION

Expressed Inclusion	Expressed Control	Expressed Affection
• Interacts frequently with the team • Shares information • Introduces team members to others outside the team • Makes sure all present at meeting know one another • Summarizes discussion • Asks clarifying questions • Proposes ways to broaden participation in decisions • Creates an inviting and welcoming climate at team meetings • Brings in quieter team members • Searches for common ground and areas of agreement • Checks understanding • Strives for fairness • Networks team members • Searches for collaboration within and outside the team • Shows interest in and incorporates ideas and contributions	• Argues for own position, challenges others • Pushes team for decisions • Brings discussion to closure • Focuses on attaining goal • Is mindful of time limits • Works on constraining factors outside the team • Structures team actions • Takes responsibility for tasks and follow-up • Makes work assignments • Proposes actions for the team to take • Redirects conversation when off track • Encourages team to "seize its domain" • Strives to introduce consistency • Wants to set priorities • Is energized by internal rivalry and competition • Encourages team to take on challenges and stretch goals	• Supports others' points of view and encourages others to contribute • Shows optimism in the face of obstacles • Praises others and appreciates contributions • Is attentive to others' personal lives and needs • Is demonstrative about thanking others for efforts • Openly cooperates • Provides positive feedback • Attends to group energy and emotions • Pushes for greater depth in team relations • Reassures and compliments others • Encourages openness and frankness • Offers to help out and assist • Provides personal counsel and coaching • Checks whether others are satisfied with team directions and decisions

TABLE 4: POTENTIAL TEAM BEHAVIORS FOR WANTED INCLUSION, CONTROL, AND AFFECTION

Wanted Inclusion	Wanted Control	Wanted Affection
• Builds on Expressed Inclusion behaviors by other team members • Finds ways of eliciting Expressed Inclusion behaviors from others • Points out examples of other teams with high levels of involvement and participation • Supports a balance of participation and air time within the team • Seeks out facts and information • Jokes and redirects attention of team • Lets others know about his or her unique talents, knowledge, and connections	• Builds on Expressed Control behaviors by other team members • Finds ways to elicit Expressed Control behaviors from others • Points out examples of teams with high levels of order, consistency, and clarity of roles • Does not hesitate to ask other team members for help and direction • Raises issues for attention by team • Requests deadlines and instructions • Likes to adhere closely to procedure	• Builds on Expressed Affection behaviors by other team members • Finds ways to elicit Expressed Affection behaviors from others • Points out examples of teams with high levels of cohesion, warmth, and loyalty • Expresses distress with the task and commiserates with others • Self-discloses personal details • Listens carefully to other team members • Asks for feedback • Compromises and reconciles