

12.1: Putting It Together- The Individual and the Organization



Build a strong team by understanding personality.

Let's return to William and Samantha, whom we met in the introduction to this module. Samantha was struggling to see the professional relevance of a personality test she recently took. William's last comment to her was that they would be crossing an OCEAN together. Next he explained what he meant.

"Samantha, you're about to pull together a team to design that new manufacturing tool. What would you say if I told you that the personality type training you just received would enable you to put together a better team?" Samantha looked skeptical, so William continued. "How will you select the members of your team?"

She considered his question and then responded, "Well, I tend to think about the various technical skills we need on the team, and I go find people who have them." William asked, "And what has your success rate been with that approach?"

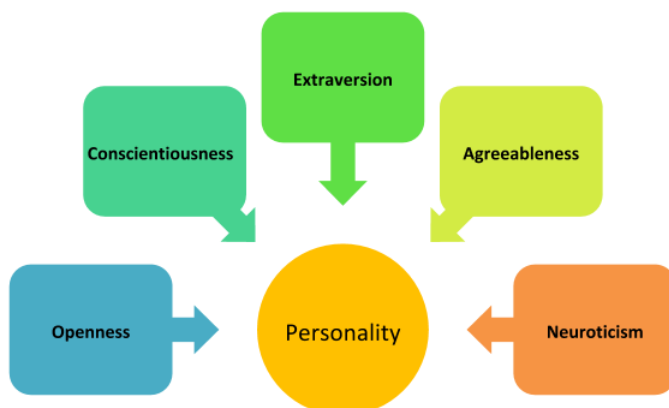
After reflecting briefly, Samantha said, "It's been pretty good. At least it's as good as the other project managers I know. Some teams perform well, while others have been challenging."

William nodded his head knowingly and asked, "What makes the difference? Do the successful teams typically have greater technical abilities?"

"No, that hasn't been my experience. The teams that have done the best just 'clicked' as a group. They worked well together and produced amazing results."

She continued, "I see what you're getting at, William. Good technical skills are not enough to make a great team. They have to work well together, and understanding their personalities might help achieve that."

"You've got it," he said. "Do you remember the acronym OCEAN from your personality class? What did it stand for?" She reached for her course notebook and turned to a page with the following diagram:



"Now think about how you might consider these traits when building your next team," William suggested.

Samantha began to see the potential uses. She realized that if everyone on the team has a high level of agreeableness, then it might be hard to be successful because everyone will be slow to challenge the prevailing opinion. Likewise, if everyone on the team has a high level of neuroticism, they will find it challenging to work together.

As Samantha went back and evaluated teams from her past that were successful, it confirmed her new understanding about a diversity of personalities and how they might shape a team.

You've now learned about various theories of personality types along with their uses and limitations. Being aware of how you perceive various personalities will make you more effective as a manager. Likewise, you are now able to see how these factors affect job performance and can help you shape a stronger culture within your organization.

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