

UNDERSTANDING TEAM WORKING STYLES



Anyone who has worked in any organization or team setting has heard some variation of the following:

- “We’re not just colleagues, we’re a family here”
- “We believe in having employees show up as their whole selves at work”

These phrases, while often well-meaning, can be very harmful especially when they are accompanied with a lack of support to understand individual needs and working styles. Without forming strong relationships and trust in the workplace, organizations often experience tensions rooted in miscommunication and pre-conceived assumptions of how one shows up and experiences the world. These tensions can lead to serious conflict, unhealthy boundaries, burnout, and more if not handled well.

How can organizations support healthy communication, flexibility, generative conflict, and strong collaboration within and across teams?

One method IONS has tried is having each team members create an “Employee Profile” or “User Manual” so we can approach our collaboration with curiosity and accountability. Our team has seen a positive impact on how we work together, communicate, and manage conflict. In this resource, we provide our template and a guide to using it help foster authentic connection among our staff.



Building an Employee Profile

When a new person joins IONS, they create a profile to provide additional information about themselves. This profile is added to an internal “MURAL” (digital white board) which houses the profiles of every active team member. The profile template we follow is below:

EMPLOYEE PROFILE TEMPLATE

Name & Pronouns*

Please call me:

*Only share your pronouns if comfortable

My Role at IONS:

My Top Values:

My Full Circle Leadership Score

Come to me for...

3-5 things that make my work day go great:

Talk to me about:

Please treat me with respect by...

I prefer to receive feedback...

You can tell that I'm stressed when...

You can support me when I'm stressed by...

When it comes to pressure, I am...

Things I manage in my remote work environment:

Things I need to be my best self at work:

A few things people might misunderstand about me:

Other things that might be helpful to know about me:

My favourite snack is:

Of the activities that you do in your role (whether they are a part of your formal role charter or just something you tend to help out with), map those activities in the circles below based on whether or not they feel like "Play", "Practice", or "Performance".

Play

These are activities that you get excited to do, you often lose track of time while you're doing them, and/or they feel very easy to you.

Practice

These activities take more brain power and focus. You can do them but they're not as easy or enjoyable as the "play" activities.

Performance

These activities are ones that you find challenging. You require space and/or more energy to prepare for and complete these tasks. They push you outside our comfort zone.

The questions that we included in our profiles were designed with specific goals in mind. Our intentions and goals for our profiles include:

- Creating common language for describing our work and communication styles;
- Identifying the strengths of each team member both with tasks as well as with communication and leadership styles;
- Inviting team members to share how they prefer to receive feedback as well as how they can be supported when feeling stressed; and
- Giving people space to share more information about their life outside of work and how it may impact the ways they show up at work.



Developed by Tania Cheng, a consultant our team works with regularly, this template helps us create some shared language and knowledge to support further relationship development across the team.

EMPLOYEE PROFILE EXAMPLE



Name & Pronouns*	Penelope Mac (she/they)	Please call me:	Penny	*Only share your pronouns if comfortable	My Role at IONS:	Programming Administrator
My Top Values:			My Full Circle Leadership Score		Come to me for...	
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; width: 60px; height: 60px; text-align: center; line-height: 60px;">Authenticity</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; width: 60px; height: 60px; text-align: center; line-height: 60px;">Growth</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; width: 60px; height: 60px; text-align: center; line-height: 60px;">Fun</div> </div>					<p>I am good at connecting the dots to identify strategic opportunities. I can hold and contain space for ideation that leads to a solid project plan that is co-created and owned. I am strong in the partnership / relationship development required, and laying the groundwork for evaluation. The actual execution of the project is not my strongest area but I can do it :)</p>	

3-5 things that make my work day go great:	1) Processing and prep time 2) laughter & socializing with colleagues 3) comfortable working environment/space 4) Finding a work flow (alone or with colleagues)
Talk to me about:	Books and Movies (fantasy, romance, action, nonfiction, mysteries); Arts and crafts: Systems, processes, and planning (love a good list)
Please treat me with respect by...	Pronounce my name correctly (after you've asked me how); give me notice and clear expectations for how you want me to show up in a meeting / on a project; if you need my support, don't act as if it's a given (ask me and recognize that I may have to drop things to help); don't dismiss my contributions or take credit for them; don't talk over me or dismiss me in a conversation/meeting
I prefer to receive feedback...	as soon as possible; direct: either chat or voice/in person; include a solution or some language that makes it about the work not me as a person
You can tell that I'm stressed when...	I take longer to respond; I find it difficult to focus or get distracted easily; I am curt or short in conversation; I'll typically say that I'm stressed; I work longer hours and don't socialize as much
You can support me when I'm stressed by...	Asking if there are things you can take off my plate; reminding me to (and giving me space to) reprioritize my tasks; being open to rescheduling meetings that aren't urgent; inviting me to take a walk or a break
When it comes to pressure, I am...	Pressure Averse
Things I manage in my remote work environment:	partner: distractions of the home (personal chores and hobbies); poor ergonomic set-up
Things I need to be my best self at work:	as soon as possible; direct: either chat or voice/in person; include a solution or some language that makes it about the work not me as a person
A few things people might misunderstand about me:	as soon as possible; direct: either chat or voice/in person; include a solution or some language that makes it about the work not me as a person
Other things that might be helpful to know about me:	I have worked myself out of multiple jobs because I was "too efficient" - I pride myself on being able to work quickly and effectively but I'm learning that this can push the pressure off of me and put it on others to respond. I'd love help with learning how to pace this or slow down. *I've got a lot of baggage with this organization and I find myself bringing up past issues without recognizing they are not relevant anymore.
My favourite snack is:	Potato Chips and Cheesecake



This example shows what the profiles look like when completed.

At IONS we post these in a collective virtual MURAL board so that all team members are able to view, edit, and interact with each profile. Other ways to display and share these profiles in your team include:

- Creating a "Team Profiles" board or wall in your physical space (if you have a shared office)
- Create a PDF file for each profile and save them in a shared location in your organization's files
- Use other online tools like JamBoard, Prezi, Monday.com, and more!



Going Deeper

The questions on our profile aren't enough to help us create the shared language we find helpful to have conversations and relate to each other on these topics. To help us take this deeper, Tania invited us to complete some additional activities to expand our individual profiles and to support creating an idea of the shared talents and leadership styles of our team as a whole. One of those activities was the complete the "Full Circle Leadership Quiz" - below are two examples of how that's used for us.

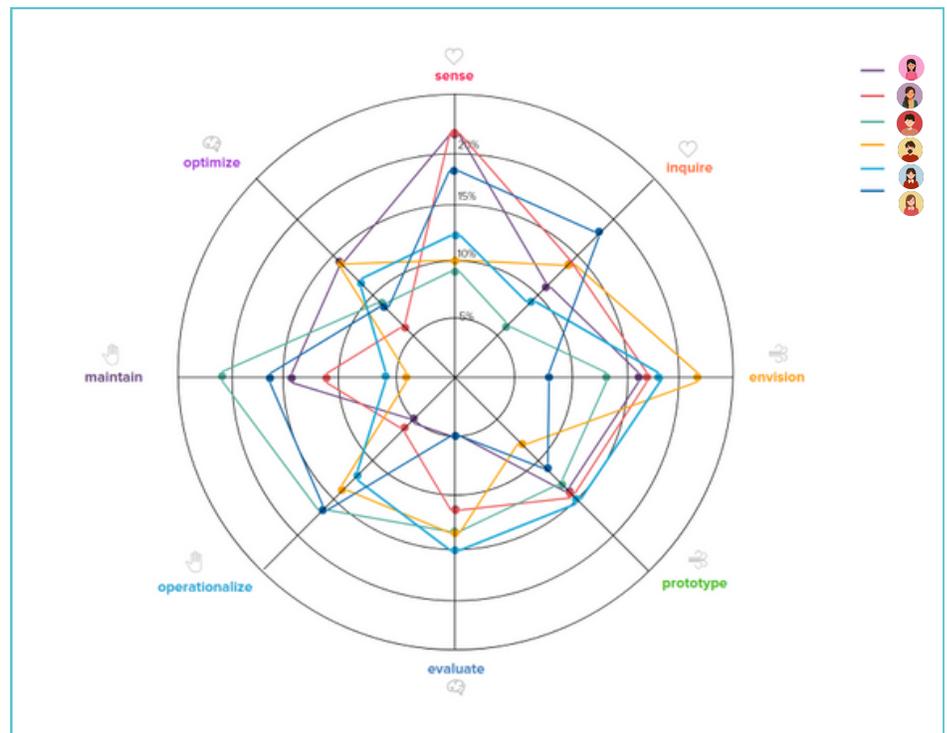


Individual Results

This report is generated from the quiz and is added to each team member's profile.

Team Results

This graph shows everyone's full circle leaderships scores mapped together so that we can see where there are commonalities as well as gaps across the team.



The above quiz was selected to help us get clearer on our leadership skills and tendencies to support our goal of collectively moving toward more distributed leadership. Depending on what you're hoping to achieve, this extra activity can be optional or more or less work focused - for example, you could have your team all complete a common "Buzzfeed" quiz to add some shared levity to the profiles.



Using the Profiles

To ensure that these profiles aren't created only to sit on a digital shelf and never looked at again, we have embedded the profiles into our organizational Onboarding practices as a tool to help new team members start to build strong relationships with everyone on the team.

Here's how we do that:



One-on-One Meetings

Within the first month or two of a new team member starting at IONS, we encourage each team member to schedule a one-on-one meeting with them with the goal of getting to know each other. To provide some framing and consistency for that conversation we provide some recommended discussion prompts and encourage both people to review their "Employee Profile" before the meeting (or have it handy to refer to during the conversation).

These conversations can be virtual or in person depending on the locations and comfort levels of each team member and we encourage them to be at least 1 hour long.

Discussion Prompts

Below are some prompts to help guide these one-on-one meetings:

- **Tell me a bit about your work history?**
 - What was your first job?
 - Your favourite job?
 - Least favourite?
- **What draws you to the Community Impact Sector?**
- **Describe your best workplace?**
- **How do you prefer to work with others?**
- **Looking at my profile, what stands out to you?**
 - Do you have any questions about something I've included?
- **Tell me about some things that energize you outside of work?**
 - Any hobbies?
 - Are you a part of any groups outside of work (i.e., volunteering, etc.)?
- **What excites you about your work at IONS?**
 - For new hires - what drew you to apply?
 - For existing staff - what keeps you here?

Resources & Links

The following resources are ones that we have used and strongly recommend for creating your own Employee Profiles:

- [IONS Fillable Team User Guide Template](#)
- [MURAL Template](#)
- [Full Circle Leadership Quiz](#)
- [User Manual Guide - liz + mollie](#)