



## The Leading Edge

4th Quarter 2015 Manager Newsletter



### Seven ways you can ring in holiday cheer at work

Looking to bring some holiday fun to your team this year? Try one of these ideas. [More...](#)



### Get to know the personalities on your team

Knowing your team members' personality types can help you understand their strengths and areas for improvement. It can also help you match the right people to the right projects. [More...](#)



### Cross-train your team to success

Can a team member's vacation leave some of your clients' needs unmet? See if cross-training could be the answer. [More...](#)

# Seven ways you can ring in holiday cheer at work

4th Quarter 2015 Manager Newsletter



[Return to index page](#)

Looking to bring some holiday fun to your team this year? Here are seven easy ways to do it.

1. **Enjoy a treat a day.** Each team member takes a turn bringing in a favorite holiday treat for everyone to enjoy. This can be a great way to start talking about different holiday traditions. And it gives your team something to look forward to each day.
2. **Try this ice-breaker at your next team meeting.** Ask each person to talk for a few minutes about any childhood memories of traditions they may have shared with family or friends. Then let your team decide together if they'd like to celebrate at work.
3. **Give back together.** Building your team can help build up the community, too. You can:
  - Sponsor a drive for food, clothing and/or toys
  - Head out to help build a house for charity
  - Put together holiday or care packages for low income families
  - Go to a soup kitchen together and help out

There's no end to the number of ways your team can make a difference.

4. **Secret gift exchange.** Everyone who wants to participate gets assigned someone to give one or more gifts. Set cost limits based on your organization's policies and what your team members would like. One option is to give a few smaller gifts over several days and then one larger gift at the end. That's when the identity of each person's mystery gifter gets revealed.

5. **Throw a party.** You don't need a big budget to have a good time with your team. If you can find a bit of time to socialize together, you can fill it with fun and games or just a little chat. Want to add food without extra cost? It's easy; try a potluck.
6. **Decorate.** You'll need to follow your company's safety guidelines. But most likely there's a lot you can do, even if electric lights or decorations aren't allowed. Decking out your work space can be a great way to share traditions and give your own spirits an extra lift at work, too.
7. **Hold a contest.** Even a small gift card or two can be great prize incentives for some holiday fun. Contests can be quizzes, charades, trivia and more. A simple web search can give you hundreds of ideas.

Whatever you suggest to your team, leave room for those who don't want to participate. And be sure to support an inclusive culture that honors all the holidays of the season.

# Get to know the personalities on your team

4th Quarter 2015 Manager Newsletter



[Return to index page](#)

Knowing your team members' personality types can help you understand their strengths and areas for improvement. It can also help you match the right people to the right projects.

## What's your type?

It helps to know or find out your own type. In learning about your own personality, you'll learn more about other types as well.

Some tests can be found in a short- or long-form assessment such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI®). It measures four characteristics that combine to make up 16 personality types. Each component is represented by a letter:

- **Extraversion (E) or introversion (I).** This is a measure of whether you're more focused on and energized by the outside world or by your inner world.
- **Sensing (S) or intuitive (N).** How do you tend to gather information? Those who are more sensing pay attention to details while intuitive people put emphasis on patterns and meaning.
- **Feeling (F) or thinking (T).** Do you make decisions based on your values and how they'll affect people? That's feeling. Or maybe you're more structured and logical. That would be thinking.
- **Judging (J) or perceiving (P).** People who favor judging can be quick to reach conclusions. They often like the feeling of closure. Those who lean toward perceiving take more time before deciding. They may not feel as strong a drive toward closure.

## What's it spell?

When you put the letters together, you get a four-faceted "type" such as ESTP (extraversion, sensing, thinking, perceiving) or INFJ (introversion, intuitive, feeling, judging) or another combination. Experts have done a lot of research about each type's strengths and challenges. Learning about your type and the types of your team members can yield great insights about better ways to work together.

There are many other personality assessments, too. Some are free to use while others charge a fee. You can find lots of them on the internet; just be sure to do your homework if you want one that's been vetted to bring valid and helpful results. Sharing results from a good assessment tool can help your team members:

- Get to know themselves and each other better
- Find traits in common with others
- Identify opportunities to learn new ways of thinking from others
- Understand more about how each person gathers and processes information

Once you select an assessment that fits your team's budget and schedule, give it a try and see how it can help your team learn, grow and accomplish more together.

# Cross-train your team to success

4th Quarter 2015 Manager Newsletter



[Return to index page](#)

If your team performs work that only one or two people know how to do, there's likely to come a time when specialized tasks pile up. Maybe your resident expert gets sick or goes on vacation. Or he or she moves to another department or organization. It happens.

That's why cross-training your staff as much as possible can be a proactive solution. And it has added benefits built in, such as:

- Help identifying and setting development goals
- Opportunities for learning and teaching
  - Learning alleviates boredom and complacency
  - Teaching engenders pride
  - Both learning and teaching can give team members a sense of accomplishment and shared ownership of responsibilities
- Lower stress when more job functions can be performed by a backup person
- Increased trust and investment in each other

It's true, there may be some things only one person on your team is able to do because of licensing or other reasons. But wherever you can manage it, cross-training can be a great way to build your team and make your customer experience as seamless as possible.

If it's not clear to you where to begin, here are some steps you can follow to help guide your team's journey:

1. Have your employees each make a list of all the tasks they perform
2. Ask each member of your team to rank others' tasks in order of interest
3. Match team members based on skills and expressed interest levels
4. Give them the time they need to train

Once a team member masters a new skill, he or she will still need to keep up with any process changes. Be sure all employees who perform a task are in the loop on all related communications.

It can also help to schedule regular time for practice. You can work out a plan with the input of your team members to keep everyone up to date on all the responsibilities they share while continuing to meet your customers' needs.

Appropriate cross-training can improve your team's capacity for collaboration, process improvement, innovation and more. And you'll never have to worry when a team member needs a vacation.

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4th Quarter 2015 Manager Newsletter



[Return to index page](#)

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