



PROFICIENCY SCALE FOR COGNITIVE DIVERSITY

Cognitive Diversity is a positive friction that leads to increased innovation and better problem solving. When positive friction is activated through diverse membership, new forms of thinking emerge. Collaboration is then transformed as team members share their differences in perceptions, information, knowledge and mental models.

Unproductive Teamwork	Productive Teamwork	Transformational Teamwork
Engaging in self-sealing thinking that validates majority opinion	Drawing on the cognitive diversity of the team to increase critical thinking and solve complex problems	Embracing a “ <i>diversity identity</i> ” by intentionally seeking out viewpoints from others with different roles, responsibilities, and backgrounds. Intentionally seeking out dissenting views to expand thinking
Shutting down diverse perspectives, a move by the majority that can lead to ostracizing those with dissenting views	Acknowledging the unique mental maps each person brings to tasks, and creating conditions where everyone can openly communicate diverse perspectives without judgment	Believing that teamwork is healthier and more productive by using the frictions created by differences to actively seek out greater cognitive diversity
Differing points of view are considered antagonistic and unproductive to the group’s work	Monitoring for and highlighting differences during team interactions for deepening and expanding thinking	Drawing on new language to expand cognitive diversity by enhancing and deepening advocacy and inquiry
Looking for quick fixes and reaching premature consensus rather than struggling with differences to find the best solutions	Recognizing that most organizational problems are systemic and require identity-diverse teaming over time to solve them	Valuing the need to slow down conversations and spend more time in dialogue to explore differences

Unproductive Teamwork	Productive Teamwork	Transformational Teamwork
Group interactions that lack strategies and/or processes that improve social dynamics, resulting in a failure to equalize voices and leading to a decrease in social sensitivity	Employing protocols and processes to increase skills for sharing differences or disagreements while maintaining psychological safety	Believing that differences increase team honesty and improve transparency—members intentionally disturb each other’s thinking for creating a more hopeful future

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