

Margerison-McCann Team Management Profile

Margerison-McCann Team Performance Profile



*Whatever else you do you have to deliver:
Improving sales performance through teamwork*

Tony Highland, Regional Director for the Barclays Central Region Home Finance Team takes a different approach to team development programmes using the Margerison-McCann Team Management Profile. And he's pleased with the results.

"When we started we were ranked in the bottom three in terms of sales performance. We're now first. The Team Management Systems development programme has contributed hugely to this improvement, and in balancing short-term performance with long-term aims."

The issues

Tony sketches in the background. "You may remember the Woolwich/Barclays merger in 2005. I became Central Region Home Finance Director shortly afterwards. The teams from the different companies didn't create a unified culture after the merger. This needed to be resolved."

But Tony had a wider, longer-term agenda. "I have a lot of experience in sales environments. I was National Sales Director for Barclays local businesses, which is where I first came across the Team Management Profile. This has taught me that sales teams working together will outperform a group of isolated individuals. Sales people tend to be independent and self-reliant. They're often paid for results and can be viewed as 'selfish'. I aimed for buy-in to the idea that they'd perform better – and earn more – if they worked together."

Tony describes his aims simply: "I wanted to move from a group of independent individuals to an interdependent team; to develop self-led people right the way through from management to the customer front line. We're now working with the 14 managers of the team so that they can, in turn, cascade a true team culture to their staff."

Phase 1: Preparing the team

Tony prepared the team before introducing his development programme.

"I started off with three things: firstly, I listened. I wanted to see how they were operating and what the problems were.

Then, I introduced the idea of flexible management. I see this as essential to sustainable team diversity. I'm looking for managers who can recognise different skills in others, who can seek help and who aren't threatened if someone is better than them at certain aspects of the job. The key idea was 'You shouldn't recruit lots of versions of yourself'

Finally, I set sales targets which they couldn't hit as individuals. They understand targets and are motivated by them. Increased targets can mean increased earnings.

When people came to me and said, 'We can't achieve these targets', I answered, 'I think you can if you work together as a team. Let me prove it to you.' Rather than just explaining the ideas, I gave them a business reason to apply them.

It took me nine months to get to this stage. Only then did we introduce the Team Management Profile."

Phase 2: Starting the conversation with the Team Management Profile - Year 1

Tony brought in consultant David Durkin to take forward this phase. The first session was at a Youth Hostel in the Derbyshire Dales. The choice of format was deliberate: "You can't rush this sort of change. We provided an environment within which people could get to know each other informally."

“Teams working together will outperform a group of isolated individuals”

Four key elements in Tony’s approach to flexible management

There are four techniques for managing people as they grow into their jobs:

1. TELL new team members; then
2. COACH/STEER to develop capabilities; then
3. SUPPORT; then
4. DELEGATE and accept that people will do things their way.

David used the Team Management Profile. Over a three hour session he gave team members their own Profiles, mapped them on the Team Management Wheel and started the team thinking about the areas where they didn’t perform as well.

There was one revelatory moment as David explains: “I lined up team members in the order of their scores on the four work preference measures that underpin the Team Management Profile. [When we lined up the team with the highest extrovert score to the highest introvert score, Tony jumped in and pointed out that the two people at each end of the line ran the highest performing sales teams in the group.](#)”

[Tony comments, “This dramatically demonstrated that there are different ways of achieving success and there are things to learn from each other.](#)

The two people at the extremes didn’t get on that well so there were opportunities to discuss, listen and open up to diversity. We reinforced this with another technique. We paired people up and gave each couple the same script to act out.

Each couple came up with a different performance. People are endlessly creative and ideas from everywhere are important.”

Outcomes

What outcomes were there? “People buddied up with colleagues who had complementary Profiles. There was a lot of networking between teams after the event. We decided to use an Upholder-Maintainer to organise team meetings.

The Team Management Profile also became a touchstone the team could go back to. If there was a problem we could refer to the Profiles and work out reasons and strategies.”

Tony raises one problem to watch out for. “Abdication. This takes the form of people saying ‘I’ve got this sort of preference so I shouldn’t do that task. Someone else must do it.’ Of course, this is an important way of maximising team performance, but people can’t use preferences to deny responsibility for a task. It’s about working together as a team to work out a solution.”

An additional, similar session was facilitated by David for new team members to ensure they were able to get to the same levels of understanding of themselves and their new colleagues. [The Profiles allowed a common language to be used across the team, to settle people in quickly and to discuss and resolve any particular issues.](#)

Phase 3: Identifying gaps with the Team Performance Profile - Year 2

David comments: “This was a strong, welcoming team that created a good atmosphere. Tony as a manager knew when to let things take their course and when to jump in. By this stage we were looking to build on these qualities to generate long term growth.

At the start of the second event we revisited the results of the Team Management Profile, but our focus was on identifying and improving those areas where the team was weakest. I used an additional tool from the Team Management Systems suite, the [Margerison-McCann Team Performance Profile](#), to do this.

This 360-degree instrument allows team members to rank task areas in two ways: by perceived importance and by how satisfied they are with actual performance. I then used a simple four cell matrix to look at the gaps. Are we good at things that aren’t important? Are there any key areas we don’t do well? We also separated out Tony’s views from the rest of the team’s. We did this for all the main segments of the Team Management Wheel in turn.”

Outcomes

Tony describes the outcomes by giving some specific examples.

“The team saw promoting as important but were dissatisfied with our performance. In discussions about this we discovered we were talking about different things.

“There are different ways of achieving success and there are things to learn from each other”

We clarified what we both meant and it resulted in me doing a lot more networking with the retail team who are the main providers of our business.

I'm highly organised and was demanding huge amounts of information from the team. They felt over-organised. Discussions led to us reducing this reporting load so that now they make one return per month rather than eight or nine.

Finally, I'm not a big fan of league tables. The team is. I agreed to include league tables in all of the main performance areas. It was a lesson in diversity: I needed to understand that they were motivated by things that didn't interest me.

These are just three examples of very specific changes highlighted by the Team Performance Profile which have helped us improve our efficiency and sales performance.”

Tony makes a different, extremely important point. “Looking at diversity may create tension and disagreement. At one stage there was a major argument between two people involving tears and slamming doors. I had to step in. It's clear to me that if there is no tension you may not be addressing important issues. Be prepared for this sort of thing. The end rewards make it worthwhile.”

Phase 4: Year 3 and beyond

David is now planning the third event in the series: “I will work closely with Tony to identify the needs of the team and look to boost their performance further. We may focus on another tool, the Margerison-McCann Linking Skills Profile, which looks at how far essential linking and pacing skills *should* and *do* take place in any team. It's an obvious instrument to build on what we've done already.”

Tony places this in the wider organisational context: “Any manager understands you can't disregard short-term performance to achieve long-term goals. This is particularly true in sales, and even more so in financial services where success or failure is seen in very black and white terms. Whatever else you do, you have to deliver. We've moved right up the league table in sales performance; we've improved our efficiency, our working together and our internal promotion. But new people have joined and we're only just beginning to cascade these ideas down to the managers' teams.

This process has allowed us to balance short and long-term needs. Having a range of tools from the Team Management Systems suite, which offer a unified approach and can build on each other to look at increasingly precise areas, has been crucial to this success. Given the way that team members, organisations and markets change I see this as a process which will continue as long as I'm in my job.”

Team development tips

1. You can use the Team Management Profile at the beginning of a process or once you've established that the team are ready.
2. Provide a common language. The Margerison-McCann models offer frameworks and clear definitions for the whole team to use.
3. Rather than just explaining team ideas, give your team solid business reasons to implement them.
4. Search for different ways and venues to run team events: ones which reinforce the learning.
5. For long-term projects, look at a range of Profiles, such as the Team Management Systems suite, and decide when and in what order to introduce them.
6. The Team Performance Profile helps team discussions by ensuring that everybody has the same understanding of words like 'Promoting' or 'Organising'.
7. Team diversity and flexible management support each other.
8. Exploring team diversity will highlight tensions and disagreements. Unless there's some tension, you're probably not addressing important issues.
9. You can use the Margerison-McCann Work Preference Measures to demonstrate and contrast individual preferences.
10. Watch out for abdication: someone using their Profile as an excuse to abdicate responsibility for a task. Encourage them to use their work preference distribution to maximise strengths and pick up on any gaps.