

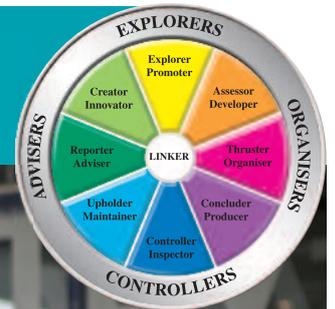


Shaping the future – together.

Case Study



Working in a Very Special Corporate Culture



DATEV eG has improved teamwork, communication and performance by putting individuals at the centre of its approach - and marshmallows!

A software company and IT service provider for tax consultants, accountants and lawyers, DATEV eG was established as a co-operative in 1966 and now has over 40,000 members.

Since 2005, a growing number of DATEV's 6500 employees have received their own Margerison-McCann Team Management Profile which has proved to be an important tool in helping improve teamwork, communication and performance. Its use has also resulted in teams not only valuing their own diversity but making that diversity productive.

Word has quickly spread about the many benefits of the Profile and DATEV's management consultancy department, HR Consultancy, has experienced a high demand for programmes using the Team Management Systems (TMS) approach.

Team Management Profiles in action

"As management consultants, we present TMS and the associated workshops to our managers and together we discuss possible work roles in a team," explains HR Consultancy's Silvia Debus. "In our consultations with them, the first objective is to make them aware of the possibilities for improvement."

"Each manager has the opportunity to receive their own Team Management Profile which can be fed back by one of our TMS accredited consultants. This enables individuals to recognise their work preferences and, at the same time, identify opportunities within their own team such as improved communication, better team organisation and the logical distribution of work tasks.

"Once they've seen how the Team Management

Profile can be used, many managers are in favour of using the Profiles with their own team members. However, it is vital to the culture of DATEV that this is always on a voluntary basis. Putting the individual at the centre of the approach is key to how DATEV uses the Profiles - each employee owns their own data and Profile.

“work at DATEV is challenging so we need a systematic approach to developing people”

"Employees are sometimes sceptical when faced with the proposal of a Team Management workshop and receiving their own Team Management Profile. They expect psychological tests or vague, unclear assessments; however,





both are far removed from the reality of a Team Management Profile.”

DATEV management consultants start by explaining the concepts and theory developed by Margerison-McCann. The positive approach and questions about work preferences, such as “How do I like to work?”, make teams want to give it a try. Initial acceptance grows rapidly as soon as all the team members have their own Profiles in front of them. “The Team Management Profile acts as a friendly mirror: you look into it and find out that you’re OK as you are,” explains one consultant. “Above all, you learn that your role in the team makes a specific contribution to the success of that team. In our experience, this high regard for the individual is a feature that makes the TMS tools clearly stand out from others.”

Positive feedback about the good experiences many teams have had with their Profiles has spread within DATEV. This means that the consultants rarely have to allay any concerns and it is much more likely that managers will actively request trainer involvement.

“ People shape the future at DATEV. Values provide direction

Clear design with immediate effect

When a DATEV team receives their Team Management Profiles, the management consultants offer an in-depth workshop. Silvia Debus explains: “We usually start with Margerison-McCann’s empirical observations and explain their theoretical approach using the Types of Work Model. In so doing, we provide a detailed explanation of each of the eight work roles. When we then ask which of these roles went well in the last joint project, the team members all try to evaluate and describe the team’s previous way of working.

“Then we form groups: we ask eight participants plus two observers to solve the Marshmallow Challenge. This involves building a tower using twenty strands of spaghetti, string and adhesive tape and placing a marshmallow on the top. As trainers, we are not surprised to see how this challenge shows the clear distribution of roles within the team - but the teams are often surprised to see how clearly their individual preferences are revealed.”

Discussion of the Marshmallow Challenge starts with reports from both observers who may be guided by spontaneous questions. The Types of Work Model is then used to explore the exercise further, starting with the role of Advising looking at how information was obtained and passed on, etc.

Participants are then encouraged to look at their own Profiles. “We explain how the four work preference measures are produced. When we ask the participants to form a line according to their net preferences, there is often a eureka moment. Everyone immediately sees that the measures are not abstract but provide a clear illustration of how each individual worked in the Marshmallow Challenge”. It becomes clear why conflicts or friction may have arisen between team members in the past. The TMS approach of work preferences makes it much easier to accept and understand how a colleague is different.

“ employees see the Profile as a great opportunity for their own career development

As the Team Management Profile belongs to each individual and they decide how to use it, the team is given various possible ways of using the Profiles in a non-judgemental way. On this basis, employees are free to decide what further action they would like to take:

- coaching each other (preferably in tandem)
- receiving individual coaching from a DATEV management consultant
- discussing further development with their manager

At the end of the workshop, the teams continue the discussion and work together to optimise their processes. They react immediately to the new-found knowledge the Profiles provide and team members often question their usual way of working on a project. They recognise their weaknesses and automatically plan new procedures that may suit the team better.

“ the Team Management Profile acts as a friendly mirror

Based on her experience in service, sales and marketing, Silvia Debus says: “Colleagues have intensive customer contact and hear about customers’ needs and problems on a daily basis. If they know about the Team Management Wheel and their own work preferences, they gain a new insight into their own work and their customers’ work.”

Positive Feedback

No-one at DATEV expected the Team Management Profiles to gain such acceptance and be so useful. “As soon as employees have read their Profiles, they are astonished at how accurately they describe their work preferences. Most people immediately understand how it was possible for conflicts to arise in the team in the past. And many say they realised for the first time that communication problems can be caused by different team roles. Discussing differences while showing respect for these differences is productive,” reports Silvia Debus. “Employees who have worked with the Profiles for a while see them as a great chance to further their own career development.”

