

Tool 3 // Understanding your team's climate



Some thoughts before you start...

We all want to work in a team climate that enables people to be themselves, suggest ideas, speak freely and openly, and resolve issues positively without personal conflict.

A healthy team climate leads to deeper engagement, happier people, higher job satisfaction and therefore lower staff turnover. People feel valued, trusted, safe and able to bring their best self to their work.

A healthy climate doesn't just happen - it's shaped by everyone in the team. We've no doubt all experienced how a change in leadership or a change in team members has created a shift in team climate (for better or for worse). A team's climate therefore shifts and re-shapes over time influenced by the people feeding it.

There are numerous models to explore and understand team climate. We are using Ekvall's (1996) model and have developed a self assessment tool for you to use with your teams.

Tool 3 // Step One

people
make it
work

we are culture people



Step One:

Here are some things to consider before using this tool:

- Why you are assessing Team Climate at this time? Talking about Team Climate can be challenging, especially if your perception is that there are existing challenges, conflicts or negativity.
- How well do you think it will be received?
- Do you feel like an external facilitator would be useful?
- How will you contextualise the exercise i.e. - why are you doing this now... To refresh, to reshape, to explore and surface, to align with a new structure, to engage new members of the team?
- What parameters / safeguards might you need to put in place (e.g. everyone's opinion is valid, everyone's voice will be listened to, there isn't a right or wrong response, all feedback will be depersonalised etc)?
- It should be a positive, engaging and fruitful exercise that engages everyone but if you have concerns seek advice

Tool 3 // Step Two, Three, Four

Step Two:

Ask everyone in the team to use the matrix on the next slide to record their individual responses. Ask them to think about each characteristic (ie openness, challenge, freedom) and to look at the positive and negative examples. On a scale of 1 - 10 (where 1 is negative, and 10 is positive) ask everyone to score their perception against each characteristic.

Step Three:

Amalgamate the responses to give an overall team picture.

- Identify the areas where you are working well together and explore these areas - what generates this?
- Identify the areas where you are working less well together and explore these areas - what generates this?
- What do people most want to change? What positive ideas can people contribute to reshape their team climate?

Step Four:

You might also be interested in asking other colleagues outside of your team for their thoughts on your team's culture. How is the team perceived?

Ask for feedback, examples and recommendations.



Tool 3 // Template

	Positive	Negative	Score
Challenge: emotional involvement of members in the team's work	People experience joy and find meaning in their work. They invest energy in the team's work.	People feel indifferent and alienated. Little interest in work. Apathetic.	
Freedom: independent behaviour	People make contacts and share information, discuss problems, and explore alternatives, decisions are taken.	People are passive, rule bound and anxious to stay within established boundaries	
Idea support: how are new ideas are treated	New ideas are received in an attentive and supportive way. People listen and encourage each other. Opportunities to try out new ideas are created. Atmosphere is constructive and positive.	'No' is the common response. Suggestions are immediately 'shot down'. Fault finding and obstacle raising are the usual response to ideas.	
			(10 very positive, 1 very negative)

Tool 3 // Template

	Positive	Negative	Score
Trust and openness: emotional safety in relationships	Strong levels of trust. New ideas can be put forward without fear of ridicule or reprisal in case of failure. Communication is open and straightforward.	Mutual suspicion and people are afraid of making mistakes, of being exploited or having their good ideas taken by others.	
Dynamism / liveliness: eventfulness in the life of the team	New things are happening all the time. Approaches change full speed.	Slow pace with no surprises. Nothing new happens. "Same old, same old"	
Playfulness and humour: spontaneity and ease of display	Relaxed atmosphere with jokes and laughter.	Gravity and seriousness. Atmosphere is stiff and gloomy. Humour is inappropriate.	
Debates: occurrence of encounters and clashes between viewpoints, ideas and differing experience and knowledge	Many voices are heard and people are keen to put forward their ideas.	People follow authoritarian patterns without questioning.	(10 very positive, 1 very negative)

Tool 3 // Template

	Positive	Negative	Score
<p>Risk taking: tolerance of uncertainty</p> <p>Idea time: amount of time people can and do use of developing new ideas.</p> <p>Conflicts: presence of personal and emotional tensions (not conflicts between ideas)</p>	<p>Decisions and actions are prompt and rapid. Opportunities are taken and experimentation is preferred to detailed investigation and analysis.</p> <p>It is possible to discuss and test new ideas that were not part of the original plan</p> <p>People are mature, have self-knowledge, insight, and control of their impulses.</p>	<p>People want to be 'on the safe side'. Lots of committees. People protect themselves before taking decisions.</p> <p>Back to back meetings. No time for serendipity. Time pressure makes thinking outside established routines impossible.</p> <p>People dislike each other. Gossip, slander and briefing behind people's backs are common. 'It's like a war zone.'</p>	<p>(10 very positive, 1 very negative)</p>