

How to **USE CONNECTION** for team development

Move beyond traditional leadership development to get good results.



Marco Buschman

The traditional method of team development works at the individual level. For example, you make a team member aware of his dominant style of thinking, acting and communicating, and of the impact this has on connection and collaboration within the team. There is a range of tools available to help achieve this, such as DISC, MBTI, Insights Discovery and Management Drives. The next step is to teach this person how he can make the best use of his style and talents and how he can connect and communicate with colleagues more effectively. This results in a change in the mutual collaboration, and team results improve. In other words, changing the way an individual thinks, acts and connects will cause the team to develop.

You can expand on this so that everyone within the team becomes aware of their

dominant way of thinking, acting and communicating. If this information is then shared across the team, and they start to understand more about each other, they will be better able to make use of each other's styles and strong points. From then on, they can make agreements about how to connect and communicate with each other, leading to even better results for the team. This is fine, of course, and it's still a traditional approach to team development based on improving an individual's ability to connect and collaborate.

Or, there's this variant: if two colleagues still can't get along with each other, and this negatively influences the atmosphere in the whole team and has a negative impact on the team results, then a mediator, coach or consultant is called in to work on their relationship. And, there's an ultimate variant: if it turns out that someone 'doesn't fit' in the

team, then he is replaced by someone who's 'a better fit.' Just as with an engine, if the defective part cannot be repaired, it will be replaced. Simply disconnect.

To summarize, within the traditional approach to team development, the assumption is that changing a part of the team will have an impact on the connection and performance of the whole team. It's a perfectly legitimate way of influencing the team ... yet there is also a modern and more powerful approach available.

System approach

The modern approach to team development is based on the system approach. This involves acknowledging that individuals have an influence on other team members. Additionally, it is assumed that the culture of connection within the team has an even more powerful influence on the individual. You've undoubtedly experienced this yourself when you were working in a team with low (or even hostile) morale, or a team that seemed to function effortlessly. Think back to what influenced the atmosphere of connection of the team and what impact this had on business results and your way of thinking, acting and communicating.

The point of departure within this modern approach to team development is that the culture of connection that the team creates has an enormous influence on the individual members, on their interaction and, therefore, on the results achieved. And so, we can say, change the team culture of connection and the results of the team will change correspondingly (both in a negative way and in a positive way).

Once the culture of connection has changed so that there is amongst others sufficient mutual trust and respect, and that diversity is valued, in addition to further developing the culture of connection, it is possible to 'zoom in' on the individual qualities. Only then is the time ripe for making use of techniques from the traditional approach.

Six principles

When working on team development based on the system approach, six key principles can be distinguished as I describe in my book *The Connection Quotient*. By consistently applying these, as a manager you make yourself and your team members aware of the way in which connection and collaboration takes place, and you stimulate the desired team behaviour.

1. Reveal the system to itself. Holding a mirror presenting the prevailing culture of connection to team members enables them to make their own choices about the

direction they want to follow. What team behaviour do you observe?

- 2. Pay attention to the energy field in which the team is operating.** In other words, make explicit that which is not expressed in words but is present in the connection. What atmosphere of connection do you perceive?
- 3. Highlight and develop values diversity.** This is about appreciating and accepting everyone's opinion and way of thinking. Or, 'Everyone is right, but partially.' Can we stay connected although we have different viewpoints?
- 4. Listen for the undercurrents rising.** This is a special version of paying attention to the energy field. It is about naming the direction in which the team as a whole is developing. What can you see changing in the team connection?
- 5. Reinforce co-responsibility.** All team members are responsible for the tasks allocated to them. And as team members, they have a collective responsibility to achieve the goals (and mission) of the team. This transcends the individual responsibility. How do team members connect and support each other?
- 6. Increase positivity, reduce negativity.** Instead of focusing on naming what has to be improved, a lot of attention is paid to things that are already going well and on how they can be expanded further. What is there to be celebrated?

Stay focused on the team instead of the individual

These six principles are not overly complex. The real challenge lies in applying them consistently. Can you simultaneously put all six principles into action on a day-to-day basis? And rather than focusing on the individual performance and style, having a constant focus on the team as a system and naming what's happening in this connected system. By doing so will achieve the agreed results based on a powerful connection. Perseverance is the key to success here. ■

Marco Buschman is a leadership expert, inspirational speaker and master certified coach based in Den Haag, the Netherlands. He specializes in facilitating and supporting organizations in creating best-performing cultures where results and productivity are combined with an atmosphere of trust, respect and an appreciation of differences. You can order his book *The Connection Quotient* at your local Amazon website. More info: <https://www.marcobuschman.com>.