

# 6 Tips To Immediately Improve Team Interactions

What do all these tips have in common? Aside from improving team interactions, they all can be more easily implemented with the use of the FIRO® instruments. To learn more about the FIRO® tools or how to become certified to administer them, [click here](#).

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## Breaking the Ice Isn't Just for New Teams

"Icebreakers" are popular introduction activities or games that help team members become more comfortable with each other or get to know each other better. However, once the projects start rolling in it's easy to lose sight of the members of the team and instead focus on skills or bandwidth each team member contributes. Add a short icebreaker activity during the middle of a project as a way to pull the team together during stressful times.



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## Learn About the Three Interpersonal Needs



The *Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation–Behavior™ (FIRO-B®)* instrument outlines three main interpersonal needs: (1) the need for Inclusion, (2) the need for Control, and (3) the need for Affection. Briefing yourself on these needs—and considering how team members differ in the amount of each they require before they don't need any more—can help you understand what ultimately motivates their behaviour.

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## Mind the (Communication) Gap

In teams, differences in interpersonal needs that members outwardly show toward others (called *expressed* interpersonal needs) and interpersonal needs that members want from others (called *wanted* interpersonal needs) can cause gaps in communication. In other words, people seem to be behaving in a way that indicates they want one thing but are saying (or feeling) that they want something else. Being aware of differences in your and your team members' wanted and expressed interpersonal needs can help mitigate miscommunications.



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## Remember the Two C's: Competence and Collaboration

When studying the dynamics of high-performing U.S. Navy teams, William Schutz (developer of the FIRO-B® instrument) determined that high-performing teams have two primary attributes: competence and collaboration. One without the other will lead to a less effective team, whereas ensuring that team members have specific task-oriented competence and are willing to collaborate will take your team to the highest levels of efficiency.



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## Make Leaders More Self-Aware



Leaders should be aware of how they are perceived by their team members. If a leader's behaviours do not match the members' interpersonal needs, there could be misunderstandings and miscommunication. For example, if a team member has a high need to be included and the leader exhibits a low level of inclusive behaviour, the team member may misinterpret that behaviour and fear the leader believes she is incompetent or does not trust her contributions.

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## Don't Forget the Agenda for Team Meetings

Well-thought-out agendas serve to keep a team productive and effective. In addition to guiding the topic toward action or closure, it also serves as a facilitation guide for the leader. This can be beneficial if a leader tends to micromanage the team's work. There may be team members with low Wanted Control and prefer more independence than their manager is allowing. By setting an agenda ahead of time, asking for input from team members, and then allowing the agenda to guide facilitation, the manager could avoid conflicts otherwise interpreted as distrust.



Please [click here](#) to learn more about the FIRO-B® and FIRO Business® instruments and how you can become certified to administer and incorporate these into your training programs.