



Myth Busters

A Working Relationship Case Study

Some fans of the popular Discovery Channel show Myth Busters may be surprised to discover that the cohosts Adam Savage and Jamie Hyneman are not actually good friends off-screen.

In fact, they don't even get along that well.

This is despite creating a highly successful on-screen chemistry and sharing a highly successful business enterprise.

Savage himself says "Jamie and I have long made it clear that we're not friends; so we don't actually get along on a day to day level."

Hyneman has told Access Hollywood that "we get on each other's nerves and everything all the time, but whenever that happens, we say so and we deal with it and move on. There are times that we really dislike dealing with each other, but we make it work."

Savage's remark that "we have a working relationship" is what really caught my attention.

In Belbin Team Role theory it has been conclusively proven that people bring differing behavioural strengths and weaknesses to any working relationship.

There are times when two people may get along famously, but then fail to be productive. There are other pairings where despite being somewhat of an "odd couple" that gets on each other's nerves, it is in fact a highly productive relationship at work.

We often measure these relationships using Belbin Profiles and Working Relationship Reports.

Whilst most of us would love to have our cake and eat it, and be highly productive at work with people that we also like to be with, the real world may not afford this luxury.

One of the points that we will often make to our clients is that you don't need to love one another to be an effective team; in fact you don't even need to like one another. You just need to understand one another.

Just as the long-running and highly successful TV Show Myth Busters demonstrates, great success can arise from myriad interpersonal combinations, providing that those involved understand what it is of value that each other brings to the team.

In the case of the Myth Busters, both are clearly in possession of some shared behavioural traits, as Belbin theory would have it.

The creative and innovative Team Role of 'Plant' is clearly shared by both for example.

These guys are thus capable of highly creative approaches to solving problems, but will then approach working with others quite differently based on Roles they don't seem to share.

The more gregarious natural "host" Adam would likely have strong Resource Investigator as a contrast to Jamie's more sober Monitor Evaluator and serious minded Specialist Roles.

Adam is therefore quite happy to be the showman, readily interact with others and perhaps take a few more risks. Jamie on the other hand seems to prefer working alone, not being rushed and to weigh things up more analytically.

The behavioural strengths and weaknesses that each will offer to their team account for their successes, as well as the potential clash points in the working relationship that they share.

This is so often the case at work where those who drive us nuts and / or tell us what we may not want to hear can actually be a very valuable "Yin" to our "Yang" in a Team Role sense.

Behavioural styles that differ to ours don't need to be fully appealing to be of great value to us, just better understood and leveraged in the right way and at the right time. Good team building does not have to include likeability.

Just because you might not jump at the opportunity to go and have a coffee or a beer with a certain work colleague doesn't mean they are not of great value to your 'working relationship' and the success of your team.

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