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How to combat the summer slowdown

A guide for leaders

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Have you noticed productivity going down in your team during the summer holidays?

This is known as the summer slump, as employees are in 'vacation mode' or understandably being tempted to the outdoors by the sunny weather. Organisations are experiencing a seasonal dip in **employee productivity, engagement and focus.**

Research confirms this is a real issue. It indicates that workplace productivity can **decrease by up to 20%** during the summer months.

The **report** also reveals:

- **19% decrease in employee attendance**
- **Project turnaround times increase by 13%**
- **Workers are 45% more likely to be distracted**

With many employees taking well-deserved time off during the summer holiday season, those remaining may experience **increased workloads,** leading to **stress** and **decreased efficiency.** When key team members are on leave, it may leave others feeling uncomfortable as they will have to **step up in their roles** – which may not come naturally.

The key to navigating these summer challenges lies not in reacting to it, but in **preparing for it,** to ensure minimal disruption to operations.

▼ **19%** Decrease in employee attendance

▲ **13%** Increase in project turnaround times

▲ **45%** Increase in likelihood of workers being distracted
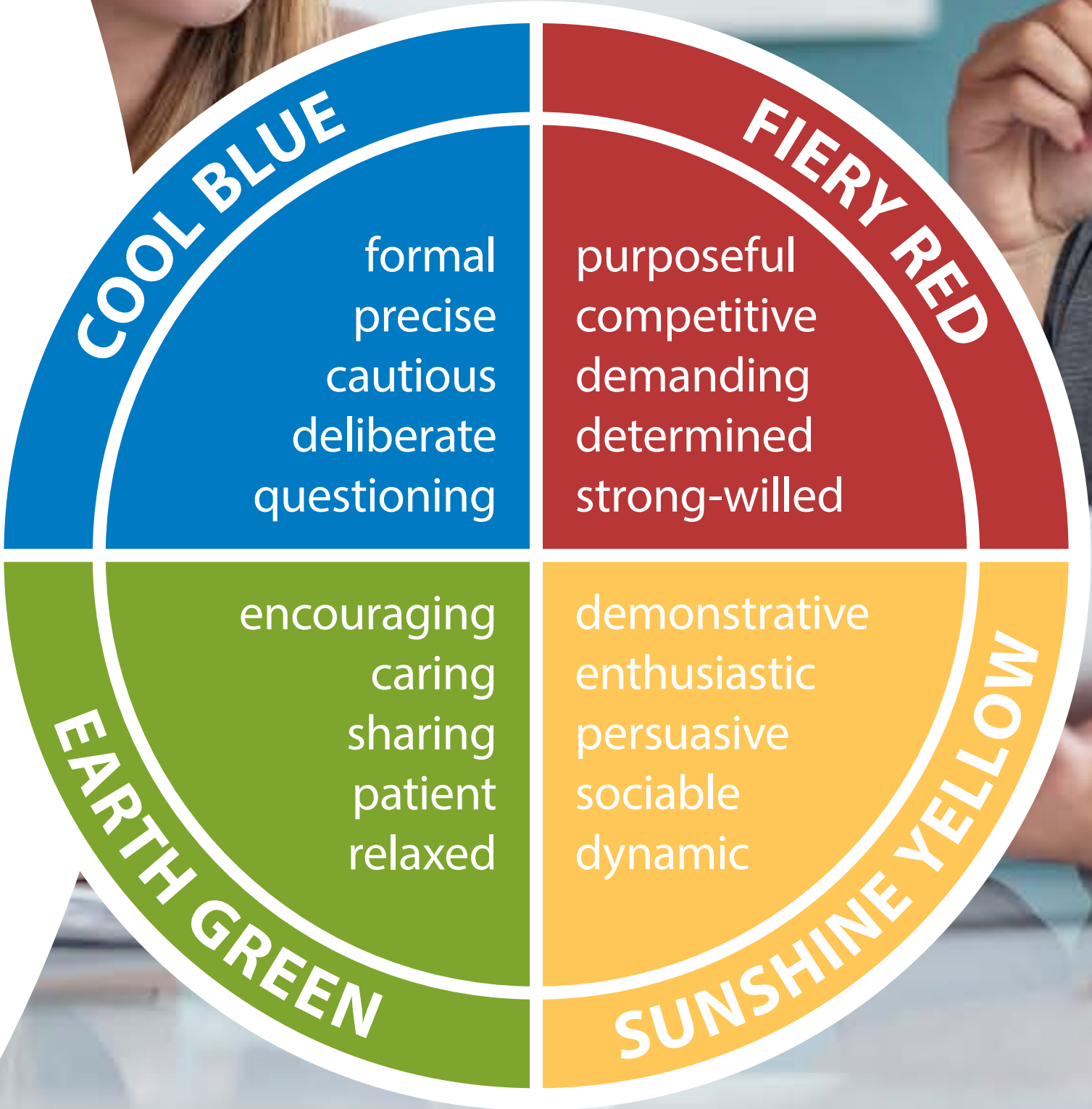
Using personality insights to keep teams aligned

Juggling OOO responses and KPIs can be a struggle, but by understanding the unique scorecard of personalities, working styles and preferences within your organisation, your team will be better placed to cover gaps.

Practical tip:

The Insights Discovery **methodology** uses a simple and memorable **four-colour model** to help people understand their **unique style,** their **strengths** and the **value** they bring to the team.

We call these the colour energies, and it's the unique mix of **Fiery Red, Sunshine Yellow, Earth Green** and **Cool Blue** energies, which determines how and why people behave the way they do.

Ask teams to create a **communications matrix** defining what each person brings in terms of value, what to do when communicating with them and what not to do. Make sure this is a shared exercise carried out by the whole team before the holiday season starts, to make sure everyone feels invested in it.

COOL BLUE
formal
precise
cautious
deliberate
questioning

FIERY RED
purposeful
competitive
demanding
determined
strong-willed

EARTH GREEN
encouraging
caring
sharing
patient
relaxed

SUNSHINE YELLOW
demonstrative
enthusiastic
persuasive
sociable
dynamic

Beat decision-making delays

When a team's natural decision-maker is on holiday, project momentum may falter. Encourage others to **consciously focus** on being action-orientated (we call this Fiery Red energy) and empower them to make those decisions. This means that the natural decision-maker can have a good break without being contacted by team members or constantly checking emails.

Practical tip:

Decision delegation maps

Work with key managers to outline challenges or business critical decisions that may arise and delegate authority to others.

Clearly define:

○ Who is empowered to decide what

○ Timeframes for action

○ Support channels if confidence is low or even pair them with a peer for advice and check-ins

This creates an empowered culture, and employees feel trusted to make the right decisions.

Identify blind spots to combat increased workload

When key staff are away, their workload often shifts to colleagues. This can overload other team members leading to stress, mistakes and slower output.

Remaining team members might feel overwhelmed by the added responsibilities, leading to burnout.

You can identify blind spots in teams and anticipate the way people will behave in times of stress, prior to this happening. Help map communication styles, stress responses and preferences in the way people work through psychometric tools like Insights Discovery.

Practical tip:

Develop a workload impact review

1 **Identify roles with critical responsibilities** and who covers them in their absence, matching tasks to personality types.
2 **Map workload distribution** to avoid overburdening one or two individuals.
3 **Clarify boundaries**: What must be done now vs what can wait (now, next, later model).

This approach keeps teams supported, informed, and mentally prepared for workload shifts, instead of being surprised by them.

Why maintaining team dynamics goes beyond headcount

Leaders need to consider not just how many members of the team can be on annual leave at the same time but also what those people bring to the team in terms of their personalities, or colour energies as we call them.

For example, if one team member brings dominant **Cool Blue** energy (analytical, detail-focused) and they're away, who can cover that critical thinking style to complete a particular project?

Teams often rely on key members to provide guidance, support or leadership. Their absence can create a temporary vacuum of a particular behaviour or disrupt established workflows, affecting team cohesion.

Practical tip:

Communicate the makeup of the team

Managers should let their team know:

○ What behaviours or skills may need to be focused on while others are off?

○ Who's stepping up to fill any potential gaps?

○ That everyone is empowered to flex and support

This helps to reduce dependency on key individuals and builds resilience, trust and accountability.

Balance the load, boost the mood

Let's be honest, disengaged teams are not healthy for your people, your organisation's culture or ultimately the bottom line.

When teams are stretched too thinly covering for others, it can impact morale. People might feel their contributions are undervalued or that their efforts aren't recognised.

How to counteract it? **Motivate teams** with positive reinforcements and workload systems to track who is doing what.

Practical tip:

Immediate incentives and collaborative systems

○ **Offer 'thank you' perks and recognition** like early finishes, taking an extra-long lunch/stroll or sending personal messages of appreciation

○ **Use collaborative tracking systems** like Monday.com for transparency, to help prioritise workload and encourage cross-functional working

Overcoming project disruptions with team agility

If key staff are integral to ongoing projects, their absence can cause interruptions to the overall output of your organisation.

Project disruptions can be minimised by fostering a flexible team environment and upskilling key members to perform others' roles. Cross-training will ensure that key projects can be handled by more than one person when someone is on leave.

Practical tip:

Develop knowledge sharing plans

o Identify key areas across the business where teams are small, of even just one person

o Ask team members to document processes and key information to develop a seamless handover when on leave

o Store files in an accessible team drive

Slump-proof your summer ... tick!

Ultimately, by following some or all of these steps outlined in our guide you will create a work environment that supports productivity and efficiency, even during the challenging summer months. You will also enable colleagues to take a well-deserved, guilt-free break to fully switch off and return reinvigorated, ready to deliver high-performance.

By developing enhanced organisation tactics, strategies and tools, the summer slump can be effectively managed, keeping your operations running smoothly and your teams engaged and motivated.

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