

# GT MINI 500 - CHOOSING TEAM ROLES

## Collaboration, Contribution and Compromise

One night, every October, on Homecoming weekend, crowds of Georgia Tech students gather to watch a time honored test of endurance and teamwork. However, this event does not take place inside one of Tech's sports arenas, but on the streets. It is the Georgia Tech Mini 500.

### »» More Than Just The Race

What started out as a fraternity prank early in Tech's history was turned into a beloved tradition in 1969. Sponsored by the Ramblin' Reck Club, the GT Mini 500 is a race that relies on engineering prowess, speed, agility, endurance and proper tricycle riding position! Each team is given a standard tricycle by the Ramblin' Reck Club and they are allowed to augment the frame within certain welding and engineering parameters before the race. On race day, each team's designated riders must circle the Peters Parking Deck (15 times for men's teams, 10 times for women's) with the rider's backside firmly planted on the tricycle's seat at all times. Over the course of the race, each team must also stop and rotate the front tire of the tricycle 4 times with the help of their pit crew.

### »» Diverse Teams

Above all, the race relies on teamwork. Each team is allowed a total of 4 riders and 3 pit crew members and it is vital that all of the members are able to communicate quickly and effectively on race day. However, it is also important that each team member is able to contribute to the team based on their strengths and the strongest teams have members with diverse skillsets. If all 7 members of the team were fast, nimble tricycle riders but none could rotate the front tire quickly, the team would fall behind during pit stops. If all 7 members had the technical prowess to reinforce the tricycle frame and rotate the tires, but none were skilled in tricycle riding, the team would likely never make it up Freshman Hill on the first lap!

### »» Playing to your strengths

It is important for the team to work well together but it is also important that the team have a diversity of skills so that each team member can contribute key elements to the team's success. Collaboration aimed at utilizing each team member's strengths rather than pure technical know-how or superior concentrated skill is often what sets successful teams apart and helps them secure victory. In any team, thinking carefully about which strengths each team member has and the roles in which they can best utilize those skills can ultimately lead to happier team members, more efficient collaboration, and higher quality results. The following activity will help your team to evaluate the roles each person prefers to play in a team, the distribution of your strengths across the types of roles needed in nearly all kind of teams, and the kinds of contributions you can make in to your current project.



# ✍️ Activity: Identifying Your Role

## As A Group:

The list of Jobs in a Team (right) comes from the Lynda.com video "Teamwork Fundamentals" with Chris Croft. You might choose to watch this section of the video if your team is having difficulty with allocating team roles.

## On Your Own:

### Identify Jobs You Prefer

#### »» Step 1:

Think about your CliftonStrengths and previous experiences working in a team. Using the list of jobs (right), highlight the 2-3 roles that you tend to gravitate towards.

#### »» Step 2:

Cross out 1 or 2 roles that you actively seek to avoid, either because you don't enjoy them or because you feel you aren't good at them.

#### »» Step 3:

Based on your CliftonStrengths and previous experiences, are there other roles you think you might excel in or would be willing to do if a team needed that role filled? Identify another 2-3 roles you are willing to take on and put a star next to them.

### Craft A Narrative

#### »» Step 4:

Based on the roles you have selected above, spend a few minutes crafting an opening narrative that will help you explain your strengths and preferred roles to your team members.

You might use the following template to get you started:

After Taking the CliftonStrengths assessment, it showed I have the following themes: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

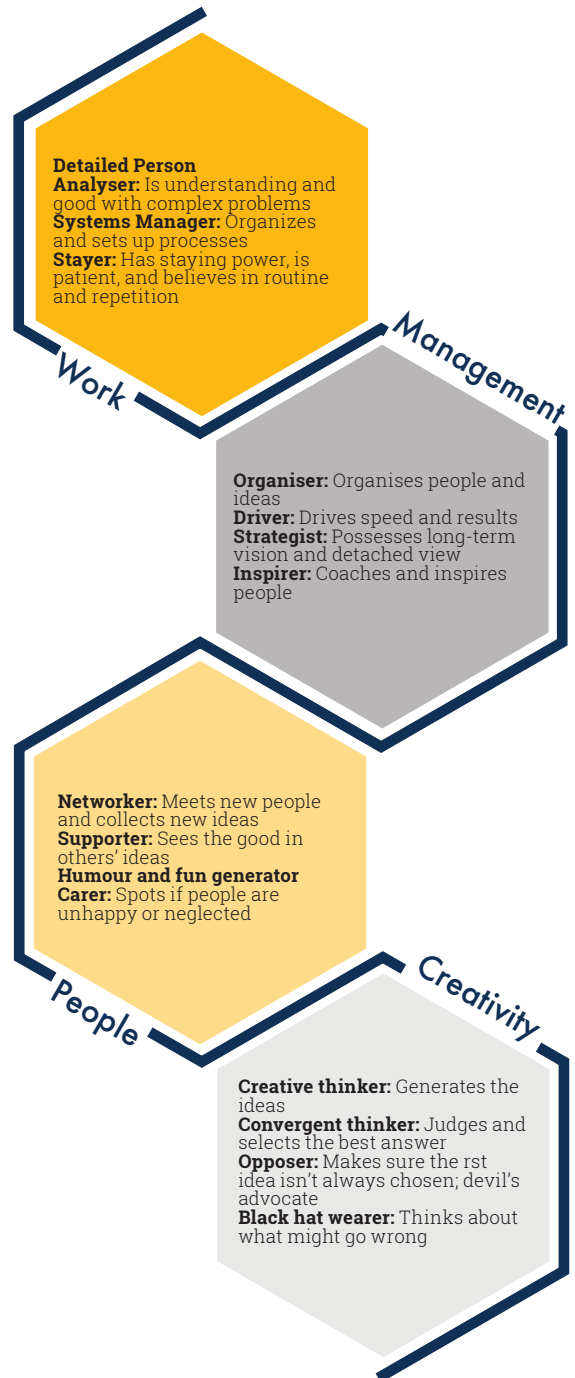
\_\_\_\_\_

This means I am often most comfortable/talented/motivated/satisfied when doing the following jobs: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Jobs In A Team:



I am less comfortable/competent/motivated when it comes to the following roles: \_\_\_\_\_

If given a choice in this particular project, I feel I would best serve the team by taking on the following elements: \_\_\_\_\_

However, if other team members prefer the same roles I identified, I am also comfortable in taking on the following roles: \_\_\_\_\_

## Compare Roles with Your Team

### »» Step 5:

When you meet with your team, use the narrative from Step 4 to discuss each person's preferred roles and optional secondary preferences.

If each team member does only their preferred 2-3 jobs in a team, are all the jobs covered? If yes, your team is well balanced and each team member can work to their primary strengths!

If there are gaps, especially if there are whole categories in which no team member lists a primary preference, individuals on the team will have to volunteer to cover areas that are secondary (or perhaps even further down the list) in their preferred roles. If each team member agrees to take on a role that is in their secondary preferences, are all jobs covered? If yes, you have found a relatively easy solution to effectively complete the project.

## »» Expanded Discussion: Role-Based Team Planning

### »» Step 6:

After completing the previous activity, discuss the following questions, either with your team or with the class.

1. Did the CliftonStrengths results give you a new insight into your patterns of thought and patterns of behavior and how they might influence your preferred roles in a team? Did it reinforce your previous experiences?
2. Did you find the descriptions of your CliftonStrengths to be relevant to thinking about how you work with others?
3. Have you ever started work with a team by cataloging your strengths and the strengths of your teammates? If yes, how did it affect the team and the work? If no, why not?
4. How might dividing up the work based on team members' strengths rather than other methods (for example, each team member takes ¼ of the project) change the way the team functions? How might it affect the way work gets done?
5. What problems does focusing on team members strengths from the beginning of a project solve? What new complications or hurdles might this approach introduce?

