



The User Manual

A practical tool for creating self aware teams





“ Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom ”

Aristotle

We believe in the power of teams

Great teams make organisations go round and we have known that the best have buckets of self awareness between them - but sometimes opening up about what we need from our teammates can be hard.

That's where the User Manual comes in...

At its most basic it's a simple handbook created by teams, to help individuals working together have more open conversations about working styles and preferences - but it's so much more than that too!

It is a powerful tool for building self awareness, trust and better performance.

Use the process to reflect and maybe even get a little bit wiser about who you are. Explore with your team and open up great conversations that lead to better ways of working.

We hope you enjoy sharing it with your team and would love to hear your feedback so we can continue to improve it!

use this as a guide to
create your own user
manual and share with
your colleagues or team!



What is the 'User Manual'?

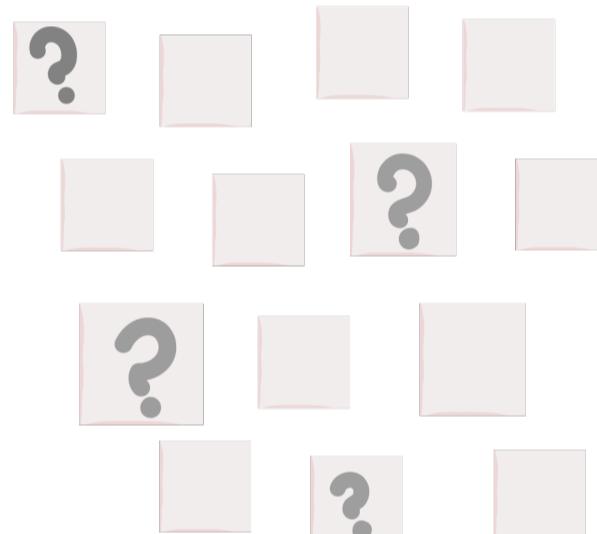
The user manual is a workshop and self reflection tool to help you learn more about what makes you and your colleagues thrive!



Each of our teams are formed of a unique bunch of people!



We spend a lot of time together as colleagues but are often too busy to get to the questions that matter



The user manual gives your team an opportunity to explore some of the interesting questions that help you learn how you all work best.



Once the questions have been chosen by the facilitator. Each team member takes some time on their own to reflect on their answers.



These answers are then shared back with the group..



By the end of the exercise you will have learnt a lot more about your colleagues, have broken the ice and understand how to get the best out your new team.



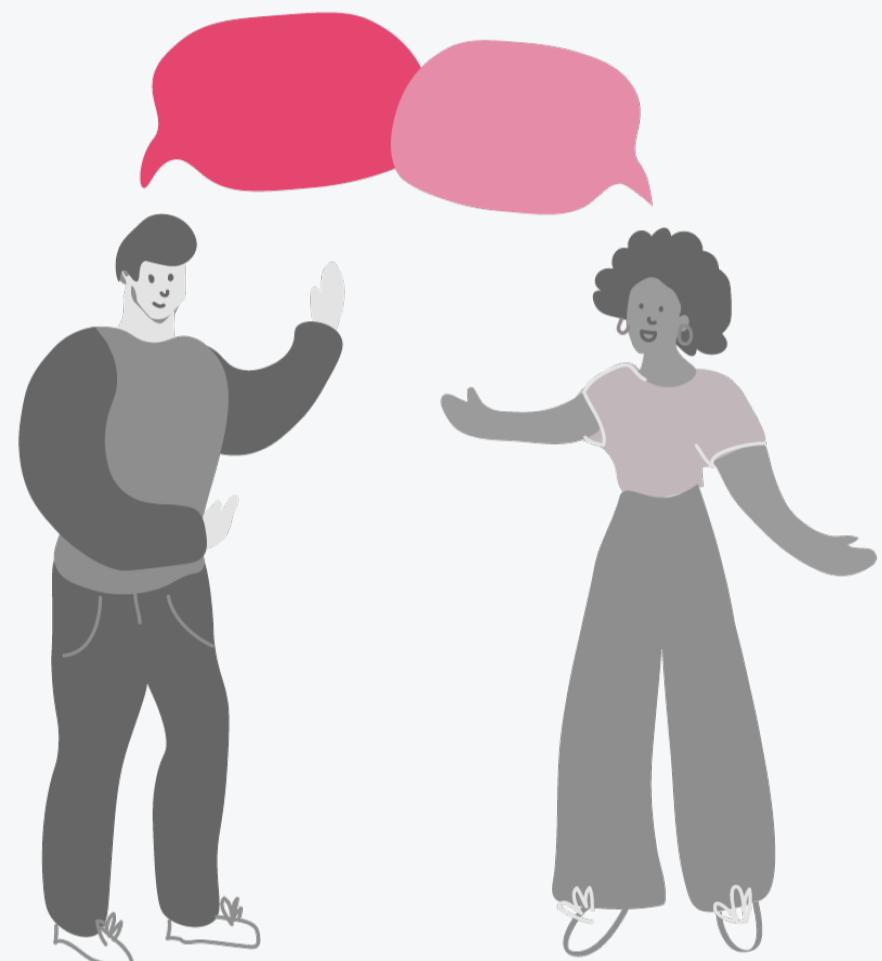
The session can be expanded to be as long as you like (from a handful of check in questions all the way to a deep dive) but for a group of 6 people you can have a really insightful workshop between 45mins - 1 hour.

How the user manual helps teams

The user manual is a powerful tool for supporting teams in their ways of working. No matter how long you've been working together people are often surprised by what they learn.

Who is it for?

- New project teams
- Existing teams
- New starters
- Managers and employees
- Anyone who wants to learn more about themselves and others!



How does it help?

- ✓ Makes teams less anxious and more productive!
- ✓ Supports personal development
- ✓ Sets them up at the start of a project
- ✓ Helps to create bonds
- ✓ Builds psychological safety

When to use?

Project kick offs

Retros

1-2-1's

Onboarding

A mini history - who invented the concept

The personal user manual concept dates back to 2008 in an article by Ben Dattner where he outlined a **simple guide designed to get the best out of you** as a manager.

Then, in 2013, Ivar Khrorud former CEO and lead strategist at the software company Questback talked to Adam Bryant, columnist for the New York Times, about his leadership style. He'd noticed that employees always tried to work with each other in the same way although they all had very different needs, and created a one page "User Manual" so people could understand how to work with him better.

It had information like "**I appreciate straight direct communication - say what you are thinking.**"

The manual proved popular with everyone he shared it with. Since then, the User Manual has been popularised and adopted in organisations as **a tool to support greater self awareness and better ways of working in teams.** There's lots of different tools and variations developed by companies including the 'Manual of Me' tool created by Leapers.



" If you use the exact same approach with two different people, you can get very different outcomes"

Ivar Khrorud

Getting started - 3 simple steps

1

Choose questions for your team
to answer

We have created a list to get you started but there is also the opportunity to tailor your own questions based on the needs of your unique team.

2

Complete your answers
(individually)

Take some time to reflect on what makes you you! Complete the answers on your own to give you the space to dig deep on what makes you thrive!

3

Share with each other

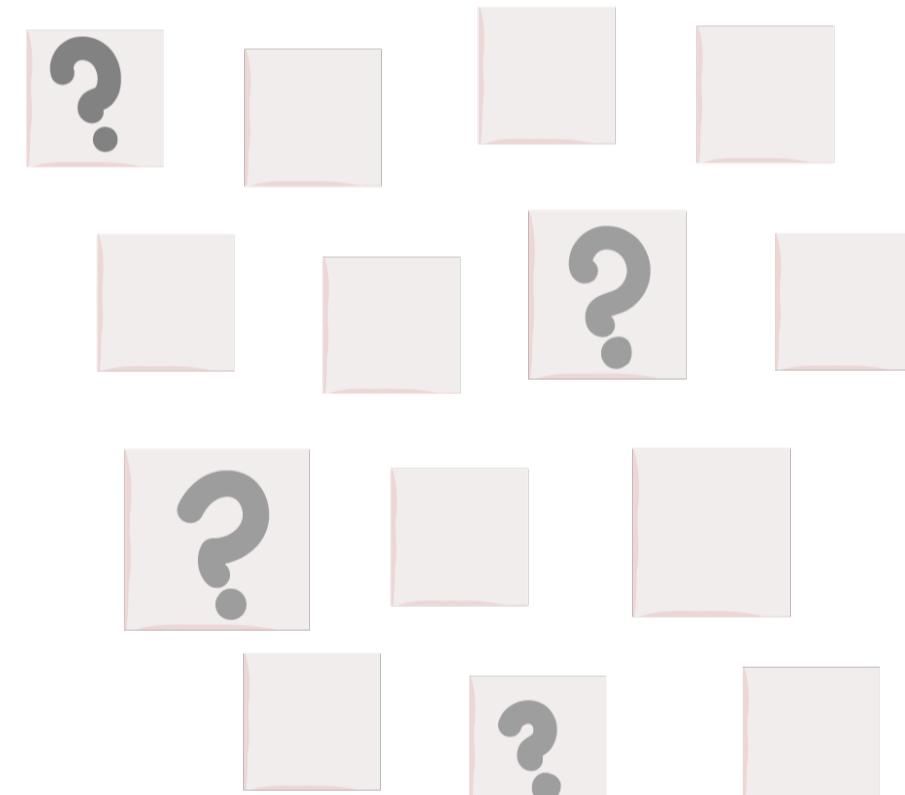
Share your answers as a team. Learn more about your colleagues and listen to how you can support and get the best out of one another.

15 killer questions to bring to your team!

There's so much to learn from each other but to give you a head start we've included the following list of questions to choose from:

1. By joining this team, I'm really looking forward to...
2. I'm most energised at work when...
3. People say, the superpowers I bring to a project are...
4. I'd really like to improve my..
5. To do my best work I need..
6. Some things which prevent me from doing my best are...
7. My best working patterns look like...
8. The things that drive me nuts are....
9. The best way to communicate with me is...
10. People can earn a gold star with me by...
11. The best way to convince me to do something is
12. I normally give feedback by
13. I prefer to receive feedback by...
14. In times of stress/ when I need help I prefer support to look like...
15. Some things people might misunderstand about me are...

If you like you can use
these questions as a
starting point to create
your own!



Want to take your discussion further?

A great way to prompt interesting conversation is to ask follow up questions. **'Why?...In what way?...How does this show up?'**

Keep the conversation positive. Remember the goal is a confident team, well equipped to do their best work, happy and thriving!

How to run a face to face or virtual user manual session with your team

Try them both out and see what works for you!

OPTION 1:

Face to face user manual session

Time to prep and run: approx 45 mins for a group of 6



Step by step facilitator notes

1. Choose the user manual questions you want your team to answer and write them in the blank template (we've included one in the back of this guide!)
2. Send the template to your team and ask them to complete on their own.
3. Arrange a meeting in a quiet place to share responses without interruption
Option 1: share as a team **Option 2:** Interview each other in pairs.
4. Discuss each question one by one. Allow time for questions to clarify anything you would like to understand better. If you took the pairs option - play back your partners answers to the group.
5. Wrap up the meeting by thanking everyone and highlighting the user manual can be revisited and shared again at any time.



Top Tip



To warm the team up for a great discussion why not kick off with a fun check in question to help everyone relax. Make it playful eg. 'If you were an icecream what would you be and why?' or ...'who would play you in the story of your life?'

OPTION 2:

Virtual user manual session

Time to prep and run: approx 45 mins for a group of 6



Use a digital user manual exercise to connect new team members at the early stages of a project eg. a kick off. Using a digital whiteboard like Miro or Mural to host a user manual exercise is a great way to connect new team members when everyone is getting to know each other.

You can check out the &us Miro Board here :

https://miro.com/app/board/o9J_kpb2rul=/

Step by step facilitator notes

1. Set up your digital whiteboard and write the names of each team member on individual post-its arranged horizontally across the screen.
2. Write your choice of user manual questions on a vertical column of post it's on the far left of the board.
3. Pair up your team and ask them to “interview” each other for 10 mins each using the questions. They should do this outside of the video call in smaller break out calls.
4. Ask each pair to return to the main call and get each person to introduce their partner ie. “Charlie likes to receive feedback by...” “what drives them nuts is ...”
5. Leave time for any brief questions from the group
6. Thank all pairs and close the exercise

Top Tip

Why not have a debrief after your session. Some great questions to round off are:
What do you notice about our time? What's our superpower? What's our kryptonite?

Some do's and don'ts for running user manual sessions

Bare the following do's and don't in mind to make your user manual sessions super effective;

Do:

- ✓ Pick a facilitator who is able to encourage open and honest conversation.
- ✓ Choose the right place to have your team conversation - a quiet place where you won't be interrupted is ideal.
- ✓ Have the conversations in person wherever possible and if running a virtual session think about how to minimise interruption and distraction.
- ✓ Give your honest answers - not what you think other people want to hear

Don't:

- ✗ Skip the conversation bit! It might sound obvious but the user manual works best as a person to person discussion - don't be tempted to share via email as a set of notes, without the conversation.
- ✗ Use the manual to "defend" the way you want things. The purpose is to open up and invite conversation rather than shut it down.

Most importantly, keep an open mind, listen carefully and have fun!

User manual templates (to print or download)

Hello! Want to work better with me? Awesome. This is my User Manual!

My name is: _____

I'm most energised at work when:

People say my superpower is:

I'd like to improve my:

To do my best work I need:

I like to receive feedback by:

I like to give feedback by:

I like support to look like:

Some other things I want you to understand about me are:

We have also created a digital version that you can copy and edit for your team

Link to digital template:

Excel:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1JGtvk3rlxQPuUJMFc2S5xflyvidGHaXP9_cgE-9ORws/edit



We hope you have fun building self aware, productive teams. Let us know how you've found the User Manual exercise - we'd love to know how we can improve the content!

Laura and Fi

Coach and Designer

laura@andus.co
fiona@andus.co



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