

The Trouble With People

This is not a romcom.

A Series On The Future Of People (at work)

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Drawing on experiences and insights

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This is not a romcom although corporate life is not short of comedians – just not the sort that would make you laugh out loud.

„There are two kinds of people, those who do the work and those who take the credit. Try to be in the first group; there is less competition

there.” - Advice from Motilal Nehru to his granddaughter Indira Gandhi née Nehru



The Trouble With People, Article 3: The Teamwork Illusion

Teamwork Makes the Dream Work – Or Does It?

When the general theme is collaboration (observing Adam Smith’s lessons), and when

specialization is important in our complex world, teamwork is often given as answer and sermon for the office mass. But whose dream exactly? And can AI be my team – complementary or exclusive? To be clear, I’m not disparaging teamwork. I am, however, observant of reality. Sometimes the wine gets clearer with water poured in.

The Adam Smith Misunderstanding

Start with Adam Smith: his lesson for productivity wasn’t about unstructured teamwork but about collaboration – coordinated and clearly defined cooperative work. The aim cannot be creating the largest possible overlap, which would clearly be inefficient. If double-checking is needed in certain workflow elements, this should be a defined, well-reasoned exception.

The Three Conditions for Effective Teams

To be both productive and effective, teams must meet several conditions:

1. **Clear definition** of the team’s task and required skillset
2. **Adequate composition** to represent the identified skillset
3. **Personality balancing** for effect – reinforcing discussion depth, avoiding frustration, neither cancelling each other out nor descending into groupthink

From Teamwork to Crew Work

Diversity is often brandished as the all-important ingredient. But supposing we’re past peak woke, does diversity matter? It matters greatly – but only diversity of minds. Other criteria substantially only matter as proxies for mental diversity.

From task and composition, derive the work schedule and substance for any team,

captured in:

- A working order
- A finer breakdown into microtasks and distribution
- Rules of engagement / procedure

These are important because working together doesn't have to mean duplication, free-riding, or groupthink – all common side effects of ordained teamwork.