

Name the bird

Fifteen minutes, no prep, no devices. The team works out which bird belongs to which style and argues about the edges — which is people reasoning out loud about behavior, the thing you actually want.

The exercise

2 min 1. Put the four styles up

Write the four style names where everyone can see them — Analytical, Driver, Expressive, Amiable — with the two axes underneath: how much you assert yourself, and how much you show what you feel. Don't reveal the birds yet. If the team has already taken the assessment, don't show the grid either; this works better before people know where they landed.

4 min 2. Hand out the birds and let them guess

Give the group the four birds in a scrambled order and ask them, together, to match each bird to a style. There is a right answer, but the guessing is the point — the argument about which bird goes where is people reasoning out loud about behavior, which is the thing you actually want them doing.

"Which of these would you rather have run a meeting that's already late?"

"Which one notices first that someone's gone quiet?"

3 min 3. Give the answer, and the reason

Reveal the matching and read each bird's one-line hook. Then say the important part plainly: the bird is a memory aid, not a fifth thing being measured. It carries no meaning the style name doesn't already carry. The team keeps whichever name it finds easier to say out loud.

4 min 4. Go around: guess each other

Each person names the bird they think they are, then the group says whether it agrees. Keep it to one line each. Disagreement here is the most useful thing that happens in the whole exercise — it means the team is talking about observable behavior rather than reciting a label.

"Which bird would your closest collaborator say you are?"

"Which one do you turn into when the deadline is tomorrow?"

2 min 5. Land it on something real

Close by asking each person to name one pairing on the team that is a bit of work — using whichever names they prefer — and one thing they'll try differently with that person. The vocabulary was never the goal; this is.

The answer, and the reason

● Driver · the Eagle	Wants the outcome, and wants it now.
● Expressive · the Peacock	Thinks out loud and brings the room along.
● Amiable · the Dove	Steady, dependable, holds the team together.
● Analytical · the Owl	Wants the evidence before the decision.

Say the important part plainly when you reveal it: the bird is a memory aid, not a fifth thing being measured. It carries no meaning the style name does not already carry. The team keeps whichever name it finds easier to say out loud.

What people ask

"So am I a bird or a style?"

Neither is a thing you are. Both are names for a pattern in how you come across, and they name the same pattern. The style name — Analytical, Driver, Expressive, Amiable — is what this instrument calls it everywhere, including on your result. The bird is a shortcut for remembering it.

Someone latches onto the bird as an identity.

This is the one real risk of the exercise, and why it runs 15 minutes rather than an hour. If “I’m an Eagle, that’s just how I am” starts doing work in the room, drop the birds and go back to the behavior: everyone uses all four, and the result describes a default under everyday pressure, not a ceiling.

The group prefers the plain names.

Then you’re done, and that’s a fine outcome. Plenty of teams find the adjective easier than the animal. The exercise has still done its job if people can now say what the four styles mean without looking them up.

The four styles come from a four-quadrant behavioral model built on two axes, assertiveness and responsiveness, attributed to David Merrill and Roger Reid. It describes observable behavior, not character. This instrument describes preferred interaction habits; it is for self-awareness and team development only, does not measure ability or personality disorders, and must not be used for hiring, promotion, or clinical decisions.

Team Dynamic Labs · teamdynamiclabs.com/resources/teams/name-the-bird — where this exercise lives, alongside the session agendas and the sixteen interaction guides. Free to read and free to run with your own team.