

Building an Effective Team



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Building an Effective Team

Communication within a team calls for clarifying goals, structuring responsibilities, and giving and receiving credible feedback.

1. Stated goals and team values.

- a. Everyone works towards and is committed to common goals and objectives.
- b. Have explicit and appropriate norms, such as when meetings will be held and keeping information confidential. It will take time for teams to mature and develop a climate of trust and mutual respect (“team norms for meetings” are provided on page 6).
 - i. Norms – develop if they are not part of teams already in place, and have this be the first objective for new teams. Use the **Quick Team Checklist** (pg. 4) to discuss/develop factors that are linked to high performing teams. Document and communicate the agreed-upon norms.
 - ii. Norms-check-ups- If the team is not performing well, or there are issues, use the **Team Trouble Ticket** on page 7 to assess and address these issues. This list can also be reviewed and utilized for the norm development stage, especially if the team has been known to have issues in certain areas or wants to avoid having them as future issues.
- c. Groups do not progress from forming to performing without going through a storming phase in which team members negotiate assumptions and expectations for behavior (see Team (Re-) Development Assessment on page 3 for information on the four team phases).



2. Clear individual expectations.

- a. Team members must be clear about what is expected of them individually and accept their responsibility for achieving the goal.
- b. They should also understand the roles of others.
- c. Some expectations may relate to regular job duties; others may be one-time assignments specific to team goals.
- d. Leadership of the team may rotate on the basis of expertise.
- e. Members must have resources available to accomplish their tasks, including time, education and equipment needed to reach the goal. Openly discuss what is required to get the job done and find solutions together as a team.

3. Empowerment.

- a. Each team member feels ownership in the outcome and has a sense of shared accountability. Cohn notes, "You get a tremendous amount of energy and buy-in when you ask 'What do you think?'"
- b. Team members must trust each other with important tasks. This requires accepting others for who they are, being creative, and taking prudent risks.
- c. Invite team members to indicate areas in which they would like to take initiative. Empower them by giving them the freedom to exercise their own discretion.

4. Feedback.

- a. Providing feedback on performance is a basic tenet of motivation.
- b. For some goals, daily or weekly results are wanted, while for others, a monthly report might be appropriate. Decide together as a team what outcomes should be reported and how often.

5. Positive reinforcement.

- a. Team members should encourage others when they are down or when it could be beneficial and praising them when they do well.
- b. Thank individuals for their contributions (one on one and/or with the team).
- c. Celebrate milestones as a way to sustain team communication and cohesion.

Team (Re-)Development Assessment

Think about your project or work group, check the behaviors that you believe are typical of your group. There are no wrong or right answers, so please be honest.

<p>Behavior Set A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> There is a closeness among members of the group. <input type="checkbox"/> There is an enjoyable atmosphere in the group. <input type="checkbox"/> People are able to challenge appropriately within the group. <input type="checkbox"/> There is a shared understanding within the group. <input type="checkbox"/> The group is achieving its objectives. <input type="checkbox"/> Group members understand each other well. <input type="checkbox"/> Group members help and support each other. <input type="checkbox"/> People are growing and developing in the group. <p>Total number of checkmarks: _____</p>	<p>Behavior Set B</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> People are guarded in the group. <input type="checkbox"/> There is little shared understanding in the group. <input type="checkbox"/> People appear to have low commitment to the group. <input type="checkbox"/> People talk over each other in the group. <input type="checkbox"/> There is little active listening in the group. <input type="checkbox"/> The group is dominated by one or two people. <input type="checkbox"/> There is little exchange of ideas in the group. <input type="checkbox"/> People do not socialize within the group. <p>Total number of checkmarks: _____</p>
<p>Behavior Set C</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Relationships are established within the group. <input type="checkbox"/> There is increased sensitivity to others in the group. <input type="checkbox"/> The group sets out methods for working together. <input type="checkbox"/> Roles and responsibilities are clear within the group. <input type="checkbox"/> A work pattern is established within the group. <input type="checkbox"/> There is balanced contribution to the group. <input type="checkbox"/> There is a sense of "team" within the group. <p>Total number of checkmarks: _____</p>	<p>Behavior Set D</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> People are beginning to open up within the group. <input type="checkbox"/> Feelings are expressed where they have not been before within the group. <input type="checkbox"/> Issues are confronted when they have not been before within the group. <input type="checkbox"/> Disagreements are aired within the group. <input type="checkbox"/> The group is inwardly focused. <input type="checkbox"/> Group members start to take risks. <input type="checkbox"/> Group members listen more to each other. <input type="checkbox"/> People are starting to feel part of a team, not just a group. <p>Total number of checkmarks: _____</p>

Scoring - Total the number of checkmarks that you have in each of the four boxes. Look at your highest score. This represents your perception of the stage of your group formation.

- Behavior set A refers to **forming** behaviors, at the beginning of a group life cycle.
- Behavior set B refers to **storming** behaviors. Although this can be an uncomfortable stage of group formation, it is a healthy one as it allows people to get to know one another.
- Behavior set C refers to **norming** behaviors. This stage is when norms are set in the group and working methods, roles, and responsibilities are established.
- Behavior set D refers to **performing** behaviors. Performance is maximized.

What to Do if You Are Not a High Performing Team - Compare your results with other people in your group. If the consensus is that you are not in the performing stage of group formation, we recommend you discuss what you need to do to move the group forward.

Quick Team Checklist

Directions: Please read the following team assessment factors. Then indicate the extent to which each factor applies to your team by circling one number per factor.

Team Factors	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree or Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Goals: The team has clear performance objectives.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Climate: The team atmosphere is informal and relaxed.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Roles: Members are clear about what is expected of them on the team.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Participation: All members participate in team discussions and decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Resources: The team has sufficient resources to do the work.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Communication: Members feel free to express themselves on all issues.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Support: Management provides sufficient degree of support for the work of the team.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Meetings: Team meetings are well planned and carried out.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Interfaces: The team has effective relationships with key people outside of the team.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Conflict: Disagreements among team members are not taken personally, and are resolved quickly and effectively.	1	2	3	4	5
Total for each column (from selected ratings):					
Grand total (add total from each column):					

Quick Team Checklist

Interpretation

37-50: High Performance – The internal dynamics of the team are positive, but be mindful of complacency and stagnation. Your team can spend some time identifying the factors that produced these excellent results (your higher scoring items). Continue to invest in these factors.

23-36: Average Performance- The team is doing well, but improvements are needed. Analyze the specific results for each of the 10 areas. Identify the areas where your scores were low, analyze the causes of the situation, and develop a plan to address the issues.

10-22: Below Average Performance – The team needs to look over the results, and develop a plan that includes short-term actions that can produce some immediate results. Develop a plan focused on long-term changes to address team fundamentals.

Observations

- 1. What do we do well? What things should we preserve?**
- 2. What needs to be improved?**
- 3. What should we do about the things that need to be improved?**

Reproduced from 25 Reproducible Instruments for Team Building. Glenn M. Parker, HRD Press, Inc., 2012.

TEAM NORMS FOR MEETINGS

- Don't just meet for the sake of meeting.
- Use and hand out agenda prior to meeting.
- Set times (beginning and end). Limit the meeting time. If it becomes clear that a topic needs more time, delineate the issues and the involved parties and schedule a separate meeting.
- Apply consequences to lateness (add humor; something no one likes to do).
- Assign and rotate roles for facilitator, timekeeper, and note-taker.
- Set ground rules up front; avoid issuing reprimands and make sure everyone sticks to meetings being about updates, analysis, problem solving, and decision making. Create an environment where healthy disagreement is allowed, and that offering alternative perspectives are acceptable. Focus on the issues and not on the personalities.
- Start off covering previous task assignments; builds accountability and success.
- Accent the positives.
- Note-taker provides brief summary within 24-48 hours meeting. Circulate the meeting summary before the next meeting. Include decisions reached on previous matters and assignments made, with deadlines for follow-up.



Team Trouble Ticket (TTT)

Checklist Directions – Do any of the signs exist, to any extent, on your team? Please check either YES or NO.

Yes	No	1. No Shows – Key team players are consistently absent.
Yes	No	2. Come late/leave early/interruptions (phone, leaving to talk to staff/others).
Yes	No	3. Substitutes : Members send others in their place. More problematic when substitutes are neither briefed nor empowered to make any decisions/take on tasks.
Yes	No	4. Chronic complaining : Start complaining about leader, mission, work quality, and other items <i>outside</i> of meeting.
Yes	No	5. Formal/stuffy : In the forming stage, members can be standoffish. This is expected. After the team has been in existence for some time, the team climate should be relaxed and informal.
Yes	No	6. Domination : Few team members monopolize discussion and unduly influence team decisions.
Yes	No	7. Dropouts : Results from domination and other factors at play. Members may still show up, but they are not involved.
Yes	No	8. Missed deadlines : Team members consistently miss deadlines for producing work and nobody gets upset.
Yes	No	9. Distant discussion : Team members regularly talk about items not on the agenda and not related to the work of the team. Time seems to be wasted and no one seems to be bothered by it.
Yes	No	10. Unclear mission or goals : Team members either cannot state goal or mission of the team, or there are different views among team members.

How to use the TTT

Directions—Handout the checklist for team members to complete and explain its purpose (how you will use it from the list below).

1. Team discussion – members complete the checklist and participate in an informal discussion of their answers. Go through each item and ask for a show of hands of people who checked “yes”, and then engage in discussion about what needs to be changed.
2. Team assessment – members complete the checklist and a tally is taken of the number of people who checked each warning sign. Record during a meeting (show of hands) or tally before the meeting if confidentiality is an issue and bring summary of data to a team meeting. Facilitate a discussion to aid in action planning.
3. Action planning – The results can be used to plan improvements in the operation of the team.
4. Warning signs are actually examples of counterproductive norms. Therefore, activity may result in developing a set of norms that are as specific as possible and linked to the issues identified. For example:
 - a. “Complaints about any aspect of the team’s operation should only be discussed at a team meeting.”
 - b. “It is expected that all assignments will be completed at a time agreed upon. If you are unable to meet the deadline, you must inform the leader at least 48 hours before the work is due.”

Reference: Parker, G.M. The Little Team Book: Leader’s Guide.

Additional Team-focused Training:

BOLD, LLC has more comprehensive “Team Effectiveness” Assessment for developing stronger, more effective teams focused on assessing and strengthening the following areas of a team: decision-making, open communication, support and trust, honesty, leadership, opportunities for development, inter-team relationships, feedback, clear understanding of goals, and conflict management.

Berry Organizational & Leadership Development LLC.



Selection of Training Topics

Training

- 1) Managing Problems in the Workplace
 - a) The Problem Resolution Process
 - b) Handling the Disciplinary Process
- 2) Acting like a Manager – Making the Transition from Friend to Manager
- 3) Facilitating a Meeting
- 4) Strategic Planning Meeting – How to Conduct a SWOT Analysis*
- 5) Goal Setting*
- 6) Performance Evaluation
- 7) Effective Coaching Skills
- 8) Motivating Others and Rewards
- 9) Assertiveness*
- 10) Effective Delegation Skills
- 11) Effective Communication Skills (can be focused on specific modes of communication)
- 12) A Focus on Customer Service
- 13) Turn Conflict into Opportunity – Conflict Resolution
- 14) The Right Questions: Effective Interviewing and Hiring Practices
- 15) Understanding and Utilizing Generational Differences in the Workplace*
- 16) Job Analysis: How to Write a Job Description*
- 17) Anti-Harassment and Discrimination*
- 18) Workplace Violence*
- 19) Diversity*
- 20) Ethics in the Workplace*
- 21) How to have an Effective Meeting*
- 22) Understanding how Personality plays a role at Work* (personality assessments to be included; separate fee if requested)

*general employees benefit from these training courses as well.

Team Specific

- 1) Building an Effective Team (-and other team-focused activities)
- 2) Mature Team Assessment
- 3) Building a Team with a high level of success in self-management

Training can be tailored for your needs

1. Select 1 management training option for 2-3 hours of training and schedule quarterly.
2. Select 2 management training options for 4 hours of training and schedule twice a year or as a half-day retreat 1-2 times a year.
3. Select 3 management training options for full day retreat to be scheduled once a year.

Call or email Cynthia Berry, Ph.D. for reasonable cost estimates with availability starting Fall of 2017.

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