

OD Network Conference Title: "Wow, so that's what engagement looks like!" How Electronic Arts is using new tools to transform and energize team effectiveness...and you can too.

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Team Health: Putting the We in Awesome

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A Tale of Two Teams ...

As a way of kicking off our discussion about team health, let's take a quick look at two scenarios based on actual cases at EA. After reading about these two teams, take a moment to ask yourself the following questions: Which team is on a healthy trajectory? Which team would you want to be on? And, which team is more likely to create something amazing?

First, we'll look at game team "Avalanche." Avalanche works in an environment in which there's a lot of uncertainty about where their project is heading. Team members noted that they didn't have direction beyond three to four days and didn't have a clear idea about what everyone does on the team. This lack of clarity about roles and direction has ultimately led to frustration and low team morale. It has also caused Avalanche team members to lose faith in their team leaders.

If all of this wasn't bad enough, Avalanche suffers from a confusing organizational structure in which "we have too many cooks in the kitchen," as one team member said. Not surprisingly in such an environment, our survey of Avalanche also indicated poor communications at all levels of their organization. One team member said, "I'm often in the dark about why I need to carry out certain tasks." To top things off, the majority of this team says that they receive little to no recognition for the long hours that are consistently required for finishing their work. No, it's not a pretty picture.

Contrast this to Game team "Beyond." Beyond is a highly experienced group that has worked together for a long time. As one team member said, "We know what it takes to work together to make a game. We know how to get things done efficiently and we know how to support each other through the process and keep politics to a minimum."

Beyond operates in a highly collaborative environment. They have an accessible leader who communicates well and ensures their work environment is one of self-direction and

accountability. Each team member knows their team objectives as well as their individual goals and deliverables—and they all have clear roles and responsibilities. When talking to members of Beyond, you come away with a sense that they respect one another and enjoy working together.

So, what do you think? If you had the choice of working on either of these teams, would you pick Avalanche or Beyond? It's not a difficult decision, right? Beyond offers a work environment that's much more likely to lead to professional success and personal satisfaction. If you were to measure their team health based on the information provided, you'd say they seem to be a very healthy organization. Avalanche, on the other hand, exists at the opposite end of the team health spectrum.

Team Health is Like the Health of an Individual

In many ways, we can compare team health to the health and well-being of an individual. At our most basic level, humans require inputs, such as oxygen, food, and water, for survival. Our bodies, comprised of internal organs and systems working in unison, need healthy inputs to ensure that we function properly. Our well-being as individuals is also influenced by our surroundings. For instance, we are more likely to thrive in a place that provides protection (as opposed to living in a hostile environment that limits or threatens our livelihood). When provided with the right inputs and the right environment, humans can do some pretty amazing things.

Teams operate in a similar fashion. Teams need the right inputs to perform at their highest level. These inputs come in the form of a variety of factors, including people, time, budgets, and direction. Teams also have internal systems and processes that need to function properly for team members to work together as a whole. And teams, like individuals, thrive when operating in a supportive environment with clear goals, effective feedback mechanisms, collaborative workspaces, efficient tools, and a motivating sense of purpose. When brought together with these elements in place, teams have the best chance of achieving great things.

In this chapter, we take a look at some of the keys to maintaining team health in a software development environment. Concepts we cover include:

- What is team health and how does it enable great results?
- How does improving team health help your organization decrease the risk to your product and losing high-performing people?
- What are the elements of the journey that lead a team to high performance?
- How do we use our Team Health Survey to monitor and manage team health throughout the development lifecycle?
- How can employees take on ownership of their team's health?

- Why should leaders care about team health?



Game team at work

How Does Team Health Enable Awesome Results?

Team Health, at its core, is a way of looking at the state of well-being within our teams. By paying attention to team health, team leaders closely monitor the effectiveness of how their team functions and then work closely with their team to improve effectiveness. At EA, paying attention to team health is ultimately our way of ensuring that we have highly-engaged employees who can innovate, create, and expand in their roles and responsibilities to rise to and overcome challenges and create amazing experiences for our players. Here is one of our most important beliefs – healthy teams create more awesome player experiences. We think this applies not only to game teams but to a team developing any kind of software.



We use the Team Health Survey at EA to keep a finger on the pulse of team health across our development organization. Just as an individual can take his or her temperature at any time to help gauge their personal well-being, we use our Team Health Survey to assess team health. The survey helps us see how engaged our teams are in their work (and with each other). It also alerts us to problems that might otherwise not be visible.

For example, a team might be suffering from a lack of role clarity or they might not have clear direction about how they're going to create their product. If left undetected, these types of conditions might turn into major problems. With our Team Health Survey, however, we have a tool in place for identifying and addressing team health issues before they have a chance of spinning out of control.

Questions Answered by Monitoring and Improving Team Health

- Does the team have the skills and tools needed to overcome technological hurdles to be at the forefront of what's possible?
- Will the team be able to engage our players by creating games and services that surprise and delight?
- Is the team engaged with one another and ready, willing, and able to go above and beyond what they've been asked as employees?
- Is the team having fun? Is it bringing out the best in each of its team members, while at the same time effectively resolving conflicts, overcoming hurdles, and rising to take on any and every development challenge?



Team health is more than just an employee satisfaction survey

People, Product, and Process

Before we started using the Team Health Survey at EA, team health was managed by team leaders on an individual basis. Team leaders would independently conduct surveys or engage in other practices to converse with their teams about team health. Over time, as we set about to formalize the idea that all team leaders should pay attention to team health, and that team health was a critical driver of success, we collected the existing surveys and asked team leaders to tell us how they approached team health.

We ultimately boiled down this information to three major unifying factors or themes—people, product, and process. These three themes became the key organizing pillars of

our Team Health Survey. As we built out the survey, we wanted to ensure that our **people** were engaged while driving with absolute clarity towards the creation of high-quality **products** that excite and delight our players. In addition, we wanted to ensure that we were putting the **processes** in place that allowed our employees to work together effectively throughout the entire development lifecycle.

Focusing on team health not only allows us to engage our employees and optimize our ways of working together, but it also gives us a better chance of identifying risk across our organization. To use a medical analogy, monitoring team health lets us see if an illness is attacking our body. And, if we detect an illness, we can then diagnose what kind of illness it is and treat it. Is it a minor cold that will pass with very little treatment? Or is a cancer that needs immediate treatment and possible removal?

Keeping our finger on the pulse of team health is not something we can look at once and then say, “We’re done.” It requires constant conversation, constant monitoring. Team health can and will change throughout the course of the development lifecycle. And it can change at any time and without warning. That’s why it’s important to measure and review team health at each stage of development. Take for example, a team that starts as a small, tight, unified group. They communicate well with one another, they hit all of their deadlines, and, in general, they are a high-performing team.

Then, as their product begins to gain momentum and receives backing by the organization, the team starts to grow. Eventually, they might expand to hundreds of people. As this hypothetical team gets bigger and as the development pressure starts to intensify, the team falls into a habit of missing deadlines. It’s not a big deal at first. And everyone expects the team to get back on track after dealing with their growing pains. Over time, however, the team falls further and further behind and the company begins losing confidence in their ability to deliver a top-quality product. When left unchecked, these types of situations can spiral out of control.

While team health is an important driver for success at EA, we also know it doesn’t guarantee success. A team with great health might even produce a dud. They might have been mistaken about the game concept. Or maybe it was a great concept, but for whatever reason the team didn’t execute well enough to create a hit. Or maybe the product just didn’t excite players in the way we had projected. There are countless reasons why a game doesn’t succeed. We know from experience, however, that the probability of success is much greater when team health is firing on all cylinders.

Three critical challenges in team health



Team Health: A Journey of Continuous Improvement

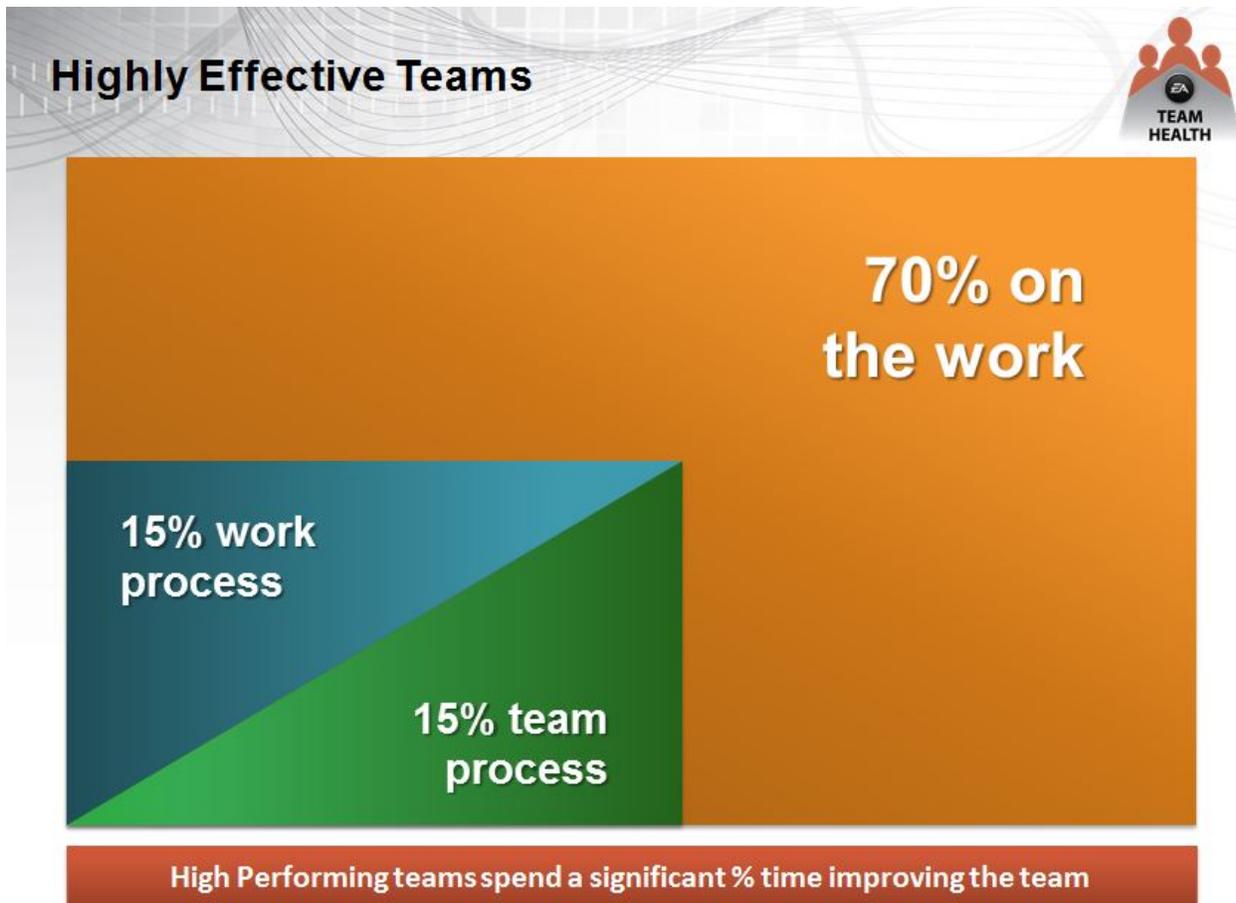
An individual's health and well-being is something that we can easily take for granted (particularly when things are going well). When the body is healthy, it functions more effectively, runs faster, jumps higher, etc. When we look at the highest performing humans, the odds are that they eat right, exercise regularly, and train their bodies to excel. And if they get sick, they treat the illness. In other words, they engage in activities that make them stronger.

Team health is similar. A healthy team can function more effectively and efficiently. A healthy team meets goals, has good morale, and delivers products and services on time and under budget. Team health is an active, continuous process of discussing, monitoring, and paying attention to how the team is performing their work. And if a team starts showing signs of trouble, then we need to have the practices and tools in place to diagnose and overcome the trouble.

As discussed by W. Brendan Reddy, a noted author on the subject of team health, effective teams spend 70% of their time on the work. The remaining 30% is split between what he calls work process (15%) and maintenance (team) process (15%). While team health is important in all three of these areas, it is critical when it comes to work and team processes. The work process involves understanding how the work gets

done (and includes such factors as decision making and communication). The team process has more to do with whether or not team members support, trust, and respect each other.

One of the key takeaways of Reddy's work is that the 30% of the time spent on process is ongoing and not something that's done separately from the 70% of the time spent on the work. The best leaders and the best teams are then constantly looking to support their team with healthy inputs. Like a trainer ensuring that his or her world-class athlete has everything they need to perform at their best, a team leader should do everything in his or her power to support, build, and strengthen the team. And if the team becomes hampered by illness (or exhibits some form of weakness), the team leader and the team work together to diagnose the illness (or weakness) and ensure the team gets back to peak performance.



Team health is a continuous journey. According to Brendan Reddy, high-performing teams spend 30% of their time on processes to help improve how the team works.

Brendan Reddy. *Intervention Skills: Process consultation for small groups and teams*. Wiley, 1994

Things Can Go Wrong in a Hurry

Many factors can cause stress and have a negative impact on team health in a development environment. Budget changes, forecast changes, management changes, as well as changes to non-management personnel, can all have a major impact on team health. Any one of these factors (or numerous factors all at once) can cause change to happen very quickly.

We can compare it to a person who feels great one day and then suddenly becomes ill. The difference, however, between team and individual health is that individuals typically know when we're sick. Even if we don't know exactly what's wrong, we can recognize symptoms and determine whether or not to see a doctor or ride it out until we're feeling better. With a team, however, if something stops working properly, it might not show up for quite some time (maybe even months). If we don't have a mechanism in place for monitoring team health, the problem can fester and it can ultimately become fatal.

So how do you monitor team health in a way that doesn't become a burden on the team or on anyone else in the organization? How, in addition, do you handle these efforts in a way that listens fairly to the entire team and not just to one small but vocal group or individual?

By checking team health continuously throughout the development lifecycle, we provide our teams with an ongoing opportunity for monitoring health and catching problems before they have a chance of becoming fatal. This continuous checking happens through many channels; team meetings, one-on-one meetings, walking around the team, and the Team Health Survey. It's like we're taking the team's temperature and saying, "Hey, we're running a fever here. Let's do something about this." In the end, the greatest value of team health is that it allows us to keep asking questions, and to keep having conversations, about when and where our people, products, and/or processes are at risk, and what we can do to turn things around.

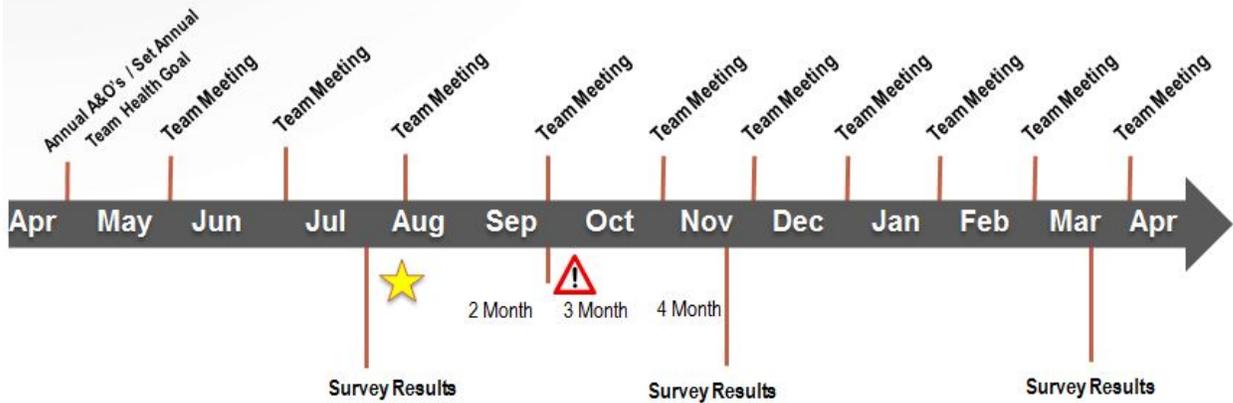
It isn't always easy to see how team health is impacting the team. We saw a case recently, for instance, in which a manager was doing a great job of "managing up" the chain of command. This manager sincerely believed things were going well within his team and reported positive results to his boss, who was then under the impression that things were going great. Upon surveying the entire team, however, we learned that this same team had very low team health scores. As it turned out, the manager needed a better understanding about the true state of his team's health.

In the following section, we talk about our Team Health Survey, our primary tool for gauging team health across our entire development organization and throughout the entire development lifecycle.

Continuous Improvement...What does it mean?



- At EA, continuous improvement is an *ongoing effort* to improve our practices as they relate to Products, Process and People
- Seeking incremental *improvement over time* that leads to long-term payoffs
- Successful teams must *constantly measure* themselves in order to improve quality, increase effectiveness, and exceed consumer expectations



With every cycle you can see the short term impact to reinforce actions and get insight into other areas of focus

The slide above provides a timeline for monitoring and improving team health over the course of a year

Team Health Survey

A few years ago, we started implementing the Team Health Survey at EA as a way of keeping our finger on the pulse of our dev teams. These surveys allow us to track team health in general and provide a means for identifying team strengths and pinpointing specific improvement areas.

At the same time across the company, we administer the survey to our dev teams every four months, which lets team leaders and others see how our teams are doing while working to achieve specific team health goals. We also have the option of checking the team's pulse at any time outside of the four-month timeframe if we want to see a quick out-of-cycle team health checkup. The process is fully automated, so the Team Health Survey doesn't take much time to administer. Team members have two weeks to complete the survey. Then, two weeks after the survey closes, team leaders receive in-depth reports that slice the findings in a variety of ways. We can view the results in spreadsheets that provide in-depth analysis of the data as well as in easy-to-read snapshots that summarize the key themes gleaned from the survey.

It's important to note that team health isn't simply about taking a survey. The Team Health Survey is merely a tool, albeit a powerful one, for monitoring team health. When it comes down to it, team health is an open and honest conversation that occurs throughout the development lifecycle, from the formation of a team through the release of a product or service. The Team Health Survey provides teams and team leaders with information in a way that makes it easy to evaluate key themes related to team health and also to act upon these important themes to improve team health.

In this section, we take a close look at the Team Health Survey snapshots to provide an example of the type of useful information we can monitor and act upon with our Team Health Survey.

"Our Team Health Survey has been a key breakthrough for us. It's something that everyone on my management team reads top down. You absolutely know where a product is tracking based on what the team is telling you through this tool."

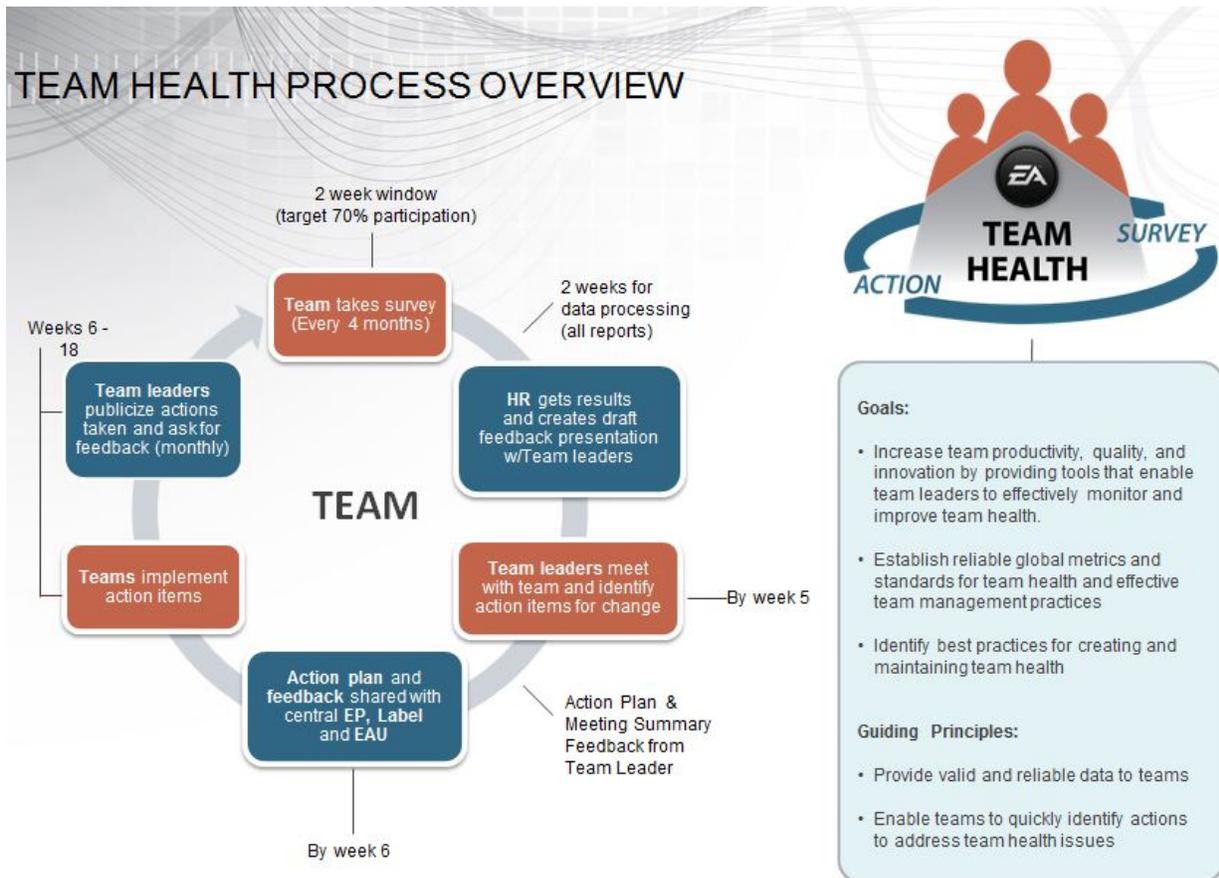
– Frank Gibeau, Executive Vice President, EA Mobile

"The Team Health process is a critical element of how we manage our projects and business, and ensures that we are measuring in a meaningful way how our leaders are operating as a team... The new process brings consistency across EA and asks the right questions in the right way to ensure we cover the important issues."

– Team Leader at the EA Maxis Studio

Benefits of the Team Health Survey: The Value for Teams, Managers, and Leaders

• Quickly actionable team data	• Ability to benchmark against other EA teams
• Link team data to key business metrics	• Integration with companywide annual employee survey
• Regular feedback loop for team leaders	• Questions that measure what matters
• Best practice identification and sharing	• Central administration of the process
• Insight and trended data over time	



Overview of the Team Health Survey process
keeps a finger on the pulse of team health

Team Health Snapshot

The Team Health Snapshot summarizes the results as they relate to the key team health themes of People, Product, and Process. As we will see in the following pages, our survey results also feature snapshots dedicated to each of these key themes.

The Team Health Snapshot also provides a Historical Theme Summary. Similarities from one survey to the next let you identify the team's ongoing strengths, while variations provide an easy way to spot potential red flags. The Team Health Snapshot also reports the percentage of survey participants from your team and displays a Team Engagement Index (shown below), which is a visual representation of the percentage of team members who are Highly Engaged, Checked Out, or somewhere in between.

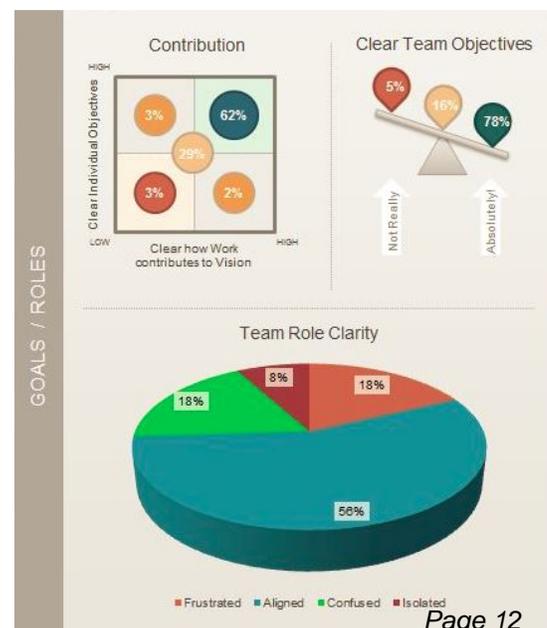


The Team Engagement Index provides a visual representation of the team's engagement level.

Product Snapshot

The Product Snapshot breaks down the data into three general categories:

- 1. Goals/Roles** – Lets you see where the team stands in terms of having clear individual and team objectives and roles. It also provides information about whether or not the team feels their role contributes to the overall vision of the product.



2. **Quality** – Three views of how the team feels about the quality of the product they're working on. We look at whether or not the team is concerned about the current quality level. We also want to know whether or not they'd recommend the product to a friend. And we ask the team to predict how they think the product will be rated when it's released.



3. **Productivity** – Shows how the team feels about productivity. This is represented by displaying where the team stands in terms of their confidence (or lack thereof) of hitting milestones and tracking to objectives.



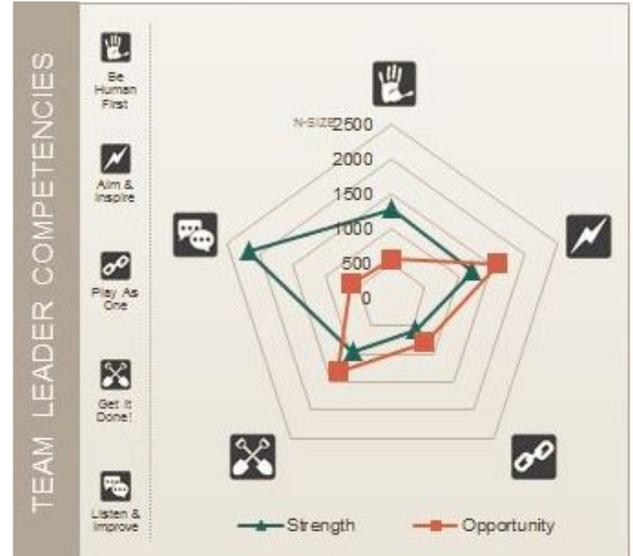
Process Snapshot

The Process Snapshot breaks down the data into five general categories:

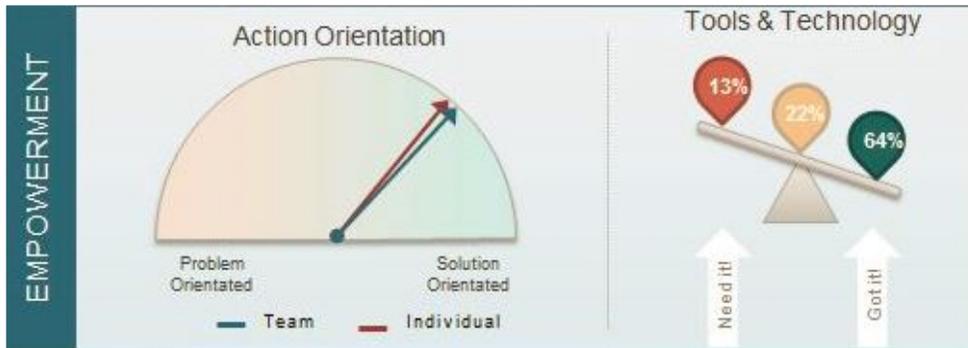
1. **Process Focus** – An indication of the priority areas the team thinks they need to focus on improving immediately.



2. **Team Leader Competencies** – At EA, we have five leadership competencies: Be Human First, Aim & Inspire, Play As One, Get It Done, and Listen & Improve. This graph depicts the team’s perception of their leader’s strengths and improvement areas in the context of our five leadership competencies.



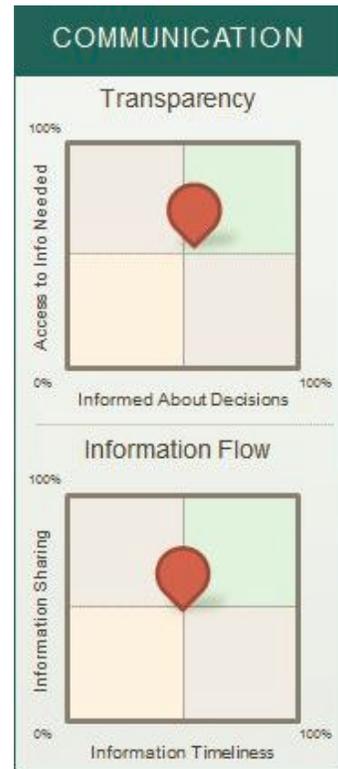
3. **Empowerment** – Shows whether or not the team feels they are problem-oriented or solution-oriented when it comes to taking action. It also indicates whether or not the team feels they have the tools and technology they need to perform their work at the highest level.



4. **Management** – Shows if the team feels they receive timely performance feedback from their manager and whether or not 1:1 meetings are held frequently enough. Also provides a sense of whether the team feels their manager supports the team to meet their objectives, and indicates how the team feels about expectations and recognition.



Communication – Shows whether the team feels they have access to necessary information and are kept informed about decisions. This graph also lets the manager know whether or not the team feels that information sharing is happening in a timely manner.



People Snapshot

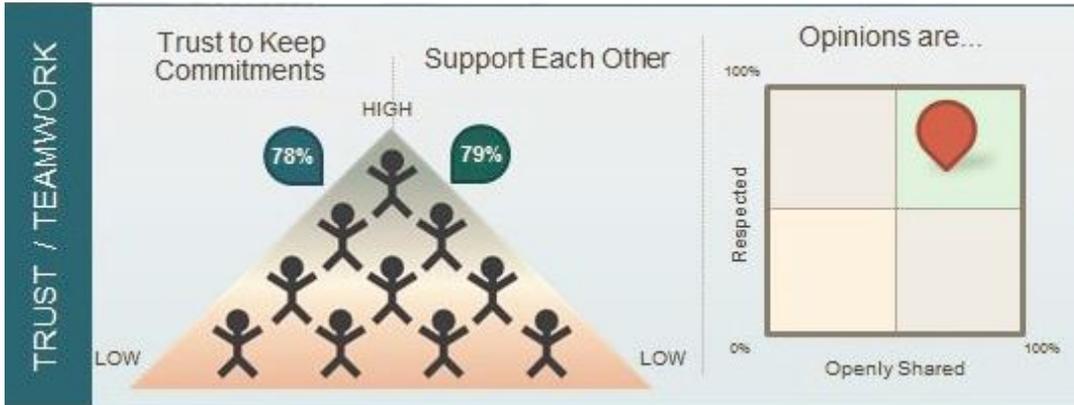
The People Snapshot breaks down the data into three general categories:

1. **Growth/Career** – Each EA employee uses a tool called MyGamePlan (MGP) to set development goals. We then work with our manager to track progress against these goals. We can see here whether or not the team feels they've been talking to their manager about long-term MPG goals and whether or not they're making progress against their goals. We can also see here if the team feels they're receiving feedback that helps them succeed in their role and whether or not that feedback is delivered frequently enough. Lastly, this shows if the team feels like they have challenging assignments.

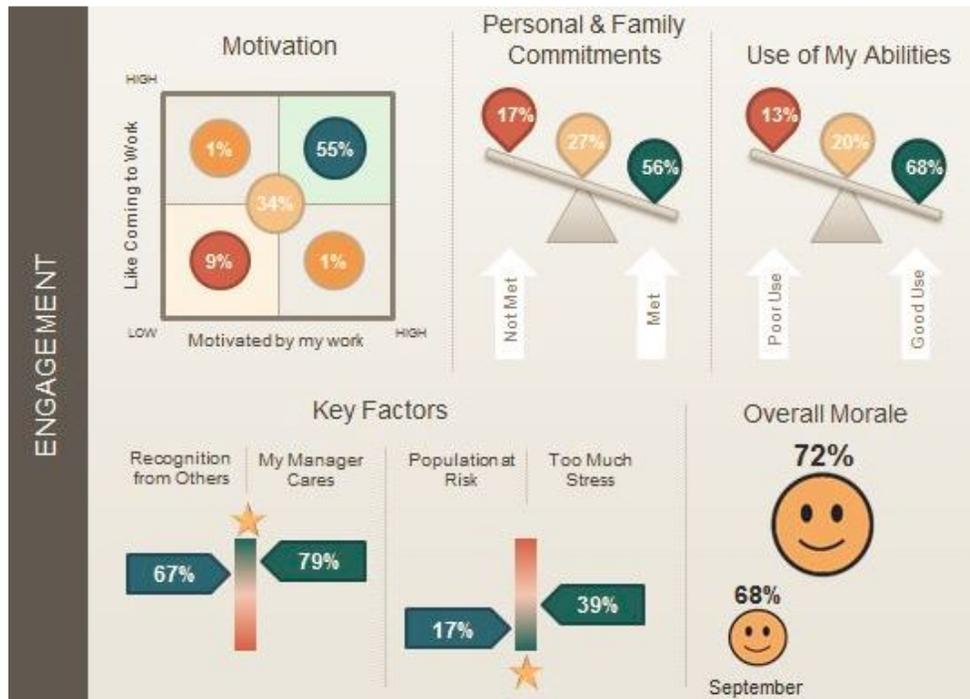


2. **Trust/Teamwork** – We can monitor the level of trust in the team to keep their commitments with one another. We can also see

whether or not team members support each other in helping the team succeed. This also shows if team members openly share their opinions with one another and respect each other's opinions (including those of the team leader).



3. Engagement – Shows the team's level of engagement. Some of the questions looked at to gauge engagement include: Does the team look forward to coming to work every day? Are they motivated by their work? Are they able to meet personal and/or family commitments at this point in the development lifecycle? Does their job make good use of their skills and abilities? Does their manager care about them as a person? Are they at risk of leaving EA within the next six months? Does job stress limit productivity? And, how do the team members rate team morale?



Team Health Survey: Measure of Success

- Increased employee engagement
- Lower voluntary attrition
- Improved work product (games and business operations)
- Increased business process efficiency
- Greater innovation

Team Health Survey in Action: A Case Study

In the following case study, we learned from a General Manager (GM) of a major EA franchise, you will recall team “Avalanche,” about how the Team Health Survey helped to improve a team suffering from poor health. To put this case in context, Avalanche had reported high team health scores after a survey in February. By June, however, the team showed a drastic drop in team health. This was not a minor blip—something was happening to negatively affect the team. Then, after identifying and addressing the factors that led to the decline, Avalanche returned to high scores in their October survey. Let’s take a look at what happened to this team and how the Team Health Survey played a role in turning things around.

After the June survey showed a significant decrease in team health, the GM met with Avalanche team members to find out why. He quickly saw that the team had gone through a major transition from a known technology base and a known intellectual property (IP) to a new tech base and a new IP. This would have caused a great deal of uncertainty and confusion for any team even under normal circumstances. In this case, however, the problems were exacerbated and intensified due to the fact that the team was also struggling to onboard a new leader while working to overcome these other challenges.

The GM worked with the team to zero in further on the specific reasons for the drop in team health. One of the most important things he learned was that the new team leader wasn’t being decisive enough in his dealings with the team. This caused frustration among the team and led Avalanche members to question their roles. The new leader also wasn’t good at empowering the team to work together to overcome the challenges they faced at the time. The team eventually started to feel like they weren’t creating a high-quality product. Frustration and dissatisfaction continued to mount. Morale was sinking.

As the GM dug further, he found that the vision and technology challenges along with the leadership issues were collectively driving team health. He implemented new management practices to have his leads better understand address the tech challenges. As he continued to talk to the team while implementing solutions to the problems identified he ultimately came to the hard conclusion that the team leader was

not a good match for this position. It's never easy to replace a team leader in the middle of development, but that's exactly what was necessary in this case. Team members, seeing this quick action, took note. They were engaged in making change and empowered to identify and address the issues that were putting their product, processes, and people at risk. Morale started to improve as they worked together to get their product—and their team—back on the right track.

As part of the process of building upon their positive momentum and maintaining team health going forward, Avalanche's new leader held meetings twice a week to identify any issues and concerns that might negatively impact team health—and to keep the dialogue moving in a positive direction. The team leader also implemented an anonymous Q&A box so team members could comment anonymously on anything in a "safe" environment.

Changing the team leader, as mentioned previously, is never easy, but in this case it was necessary for improving the health and well-being of the team. That being said, the more important takeaway from this case is that the GM worked together with the team to continuously measure team health and drive change. Moreover, the management change opened the door for the team to once again be empowered and engaged. They could again have an open dialogue about their work, have trust in each another and in their leadership, and get back on track to developing an awesome game for our players.

How Employees Can Take Ownership of Team Health

Some team leaders mistakenly fall into the trap of thinking they own team health for the entire team. Indeed, this thinking can be falsely reinforced by the fact that the results of our Team Health Survey come directly to the team leader. While it's critical for the team leader to play a major role in supporting and encouraging team health, it's even more important for them to work closely with the entire team to diagnose the survey results and decide upon the appropriate corrective actions as a team. Team health is truly a team effort!

We've seen cases in which a team leader reads the results, comes to a conclusion about what he or she deems the appropriate action the team needs to take, and unilaterally tells the team what they're going to do as a result of the Team Health Survey. What typically happens next in these cases is that the team doesn't buy in to the decision. They may not agree with the team leader's approach, and/or they might feel like they don't have a "voice" when it comes to team health. Or worse, they go along with the proposed solution and then blame the team leader when it does not create the change they wanted. In the end, this kind of approach can diminish the team members' value and damage team health.

How does this look in practice? Let's say that a team leader sees from the Team Health Survey that the team wants more communication. Instead of talking to the team to find out what exactly they mean by this, the team leader decides to forward every email he gets from exec's related to their game. Everything! All of a sudden the team is bombarded by emails, and most of the emails aren't relevant to their day-to-day work. Soon the team is rebelling against the team leader's idea to open the email floodgates.

"This isn't what we were talking about when we asked for more communication," they say. "You did your own thing. You didn't listen to us. You have no idea what we mean by saying we want more communication." Instead of improving communication, the team leader's action has done just the opposite and they've created an even bigger gap between themselves and the team.

Why Great Leaders Care about Team Health

As we've discussed, team leaders don't own team health. Instead, they play a critical role by creating an environment in which team health is discussed, encouraged, and valued. Some of the primary reasons a team leader should care about team health are fairly obvious and include:

- Ensure that the team is running at peak capacity, which in turn helps to maintain and improve quality, predictability, and engagement.
- Identify and implement best practices to be shared within the team and across the entire organization.
- Identify warning signs that indicate when the team's game and/or people are at risk.

It's natural in any organizational hierarchy for employees to attribute power and authority to the team leader. And it can be a challenge for the leader to balance his or her role as the management representative and decision maker for the team with their ongoing desire to maintain the ongoing open dialogue that's required for team health. Eventually, however, whether or not the team sees team health as important can come down to what the team leader thinks is important (or not). Team leaders who focus on team health, talk about team health, and engage in team health are going to send a clear signal to their team that it's an important part of the work culture.

A team leader can show that they value team health in a number of ways. Do they actively talk about team health as being important? Do they create an environment that allows the team to safely discuss team health? And do they enable the right conversations to occur so that the team believes that they can make change happen,

that they have control over their destiny, and that they can contribute to team health (especially in times when they're not satisfied about how things are going)?

When Meteors Strike: Concerns over What Could Go Wrong with the Team Health Survey

Is It Confidential?

When we first launched the Team Health Survey, many employees asked about confidentiality. They asked, "Is this survey really confidential?" and "Will my responses really be anonymous?" Indeed, we believe that privacy of responses is a critical factor for administering the Team Health Survey properly. We want to provide a "safe" forum for survey respondents to speak openly and honestly. Our efforts to ensure confidentiality include:

- We scramble the comments on our results spreadsheet to make it impossible to trace responses back to individual team members.
- We don't report data for teams with fewer than five people, because it's difficult to guarantee confidentiality with such a small sample size.
- We don't report data when there's less than a 60% participation rate, because it's difficult to rely on the information when you don't have representation from a larger majority of the team.

Tips to consider in your own survey

Will this Data Be Used to Measure Employee Performance?

Some employees may be concerned that data from a Team Health Survey could be misused as a performance tool. For instance, there might be concern that an executive might put pressure on a team leader to improve performance based on team health results, which would then cause the team leader to put pressure on his or her team. Be clear about your use of a Team Health Survey and make it clear at all levels of the organization that the survey is for monitoring the health and well-being within our teams—and that it is not an individual performance tool.

Will the Survey Take Too Long?

We all work in a very fast-paced development environment, and we suggest you work hard to minimize the amount of time it takes to complete the survey and read the results. We've seen a few cases in which teams were too busy to review the data properly or put the results into action. Consider flexing to enable those teams to take the survey on the frequency that works best for them. If you work from the point of view that you are building the "teams' survey," they will be more likely to make completing the survey a priority.

Reboots: Learning Points

As we have continued to learn from and refine our team health practices, here are a few of the key learnings we've made along the way.

Establishing Goals for Team Health Metrics

The implementation of the Team Health Survey has been a major factor contributing to our company's overall emphasis on team health. In rolling out the survey, we wanted to be more proactive about ensuring that our team health efforts resulted in real, tangible change. Therefore, we asked teams to set annual team health goals. Now, teams can use the survey to gauge how they're performing against specific team health targets from year to year.

Using Data to Drive Improvement

The Team Health Survey has changed the nature of our team health discussions by inserting data into the conversation. Where our teams used to discuss their "gut feelings" about team health, they can now use data-driven feedback to be much more precise and consistent. Assessment has been the right foundation. Now, we are turning more of our attention to developing resources to help leaders and their teams improve their health.

Actions to Improve Team Health

The healthiest teams we see are vigilant about actions to improve team health. They set long term goals and use the surveys as one data point along the way. What really makes a difference are the regular practices that those teams set-up for a continuous dialogue about what matters to the team. Team leaders create conversations that allow for cycles of learning and improvement. When issues are identified the leaders engage the teams to decide on what actions to take and follow-up regularly. These best practices are a core foundation of EA's ability to make awesome games.



EA China team

PRINCIPLES OF AWESOME DEVELOPMENT

- 1. Team health drives awesome.** The healthiest teams have created the highest quality in player's experiences with the software. Team health improves team members' investment in quality and productivity.
- 2. Product, process, and people are the vital signs of team health.** Focusing on these three themes provides us with a framework and a common language for talking about team health in a consistent way across the entire organization.
- 3. When quality and predictability are in the red zone, issues in team health are almost always a contributor.** While team health doesn't guarantee success, the probability for developing a hit very low for unhealthy teams.
- 4. More than half the journey to team health lies in measuring, reporting, and discussing survey results.** This survey results are presented in a way that allows us to identify and act quickly on team health issues. What is quantified and out in the open can be changed.
- 5. Each team member is responsible for team health.** Some team leaders mistakenly fall into the trap of thinking they own team health for their team. We believe everyone is responsible for speaking up about and improving the health of their teams.