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Team Effectiveness



All organizations require their people to work in groups.

The most successful organizations find ways to realize the full potential and capability of teams - the culminated best efforts of all members.

In high performing organizations, the most successful groups function as teams. A team can be defined as two or more people who come together to achieve a common purpose.

Characteristics of an Effective Team

- Effective teams:
- share a common goal
 - communicate openly and honestly
 - consider conflict part of learning
 - cultivate a sense of belonging
 - gather and share information
 - encourage creativity and risk-taking
 - practice continuous improvement
 - have supportive leadership
 - are interdependent.

The right environment for a team to flourish is one of trust, respect, support, commitment, shared vision, openness and honesty, empowerment and involvement of all members, and a learning environment.

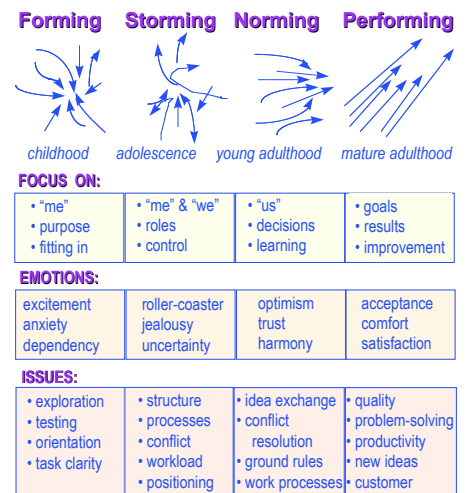
Key Team Processes

A process is a series of activities that go together to achieve a specific end-product or service. Within a team, there are work processes, and relationship processes. If the relationship processes are designed right, they help all members participate equally and support one another.

Some of the more important team processes are: problem-solving, decision-making, goal accomplishment, resolving conflicts, communication, continuous learning and improvement.

The Stages of Team Development

Bruce W. Tuckman developed this model of team development. All teams evolve through four main stages. *Forming* is when the members are first brought together. It is a period of exploration, testing and orientation. *Storming* is a difficult but inevitable stage, where members may compete and conflict. *Norming* is the stage where the team starts to pull together, and noticeable progress begins to be made. *Performing* is characterized by a high level of task focus, and the team producing consistent and excellent results.



The time it may take to cycle through the stages depends on a variety of factors. Any change can cause the team to recycle through the stages.

Effective Team Leadership

It is important for a team leader to create a climate in which people can develop and contribute to their full potential. The climate must be one of cooperation, commitment, and team-focus. A good leader must also be a good coach.

Here are some traits of effective, team-centered leaders:

- provide a vision of what the team can achieve
- inspire people to find better ways of doing things
- encourage joint responsibility for work
- promote team problem-solving
- communicate fully and openly
- recognize successes of both the team and individuals in a timely manner
- work to constantly develop the team
- help team learn from mistakes
- support team members in making decisions
- see her/himself as a resource in support of the team
- empower team members.

Common Team Problems

Every team experiences problems which can be serious enough to erode morale, interfere with getting the job done, and may even destroy the group. It is important for a team leader to be sensitive to these issues and to work with the team to expose and solve them. Some problems are outlined below:

CONFLICT

The most common team problem is conflict. Work-related issues, such as overlapping roles and access to resources can best be resolved through open and frank discussion.

STALLED PROGRESS

This can be due to inexperience, lack of consensus, lack of support, or other factors. The leader should focus the team on the goal and on identifying the blockage and needs which must be addressed to go forward again.

DOMINATING MEMBERS

Members who talk too much and override others can impede the team's progress and cause impatience and anger among other members. You may have to meet separately with

the troublesome person, and work to ensure all members get equal input.

RELUCTANT PARTICIPANTS

Some members are uncomfortable speaking in a group, or are concerned about appearing to be inferior to others. This can cause them to withdraw and be slow to participate. The leader must coach and encourage them, welcome their contribution, and work to build their sense of self-esteem.

UNFOCUSSED DISCUSSIONS

Often, members stray away from the real purpose of a meeting, perhaps because of lack of knowledge or wanting to avoid a sensitive topic. Keep on top of the topic! Don't let yourself be swayed away. The best tool you can use is an agenda, and a project plan that keeps the team on track.

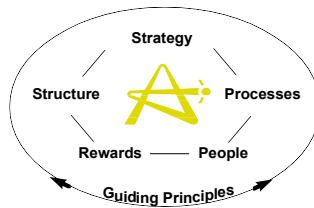
These, and other types of team problems, may occur with greater or lesser frequency depending on what stage of development the team is in. It is essential that the leader always be aware of what is occurring and move to address the problem as quickly as possible.

The 6-Point Check List

The 6-Point checklist mentioned in other units of MFR also has relevance to team-building.

Each of the six points lead you to different considerations important to creating an effective and productive team.

6-Point Checklist



STRATEGY: What is our purpose and direction as a team? How can we accomplish our goals? What are the strengths we can build on and the obstacles we must overcome? Our roles and responsibilities?

PROCESSES: How do we prioritize and get our work done? How do we work together? Measure performance? Improve performance?

PEOPLE: How do we utilize our talents? Develop our skills? Handle conflicts? Support one another?

REWARDS: How do we reward and recognize our members? Do these align us with the goals of the organization?

STRUCTURE: What are our reporting relationships? Do they enable our work or make it difficult? Where does responsibility and decision-making power lie? How do we interface with other teams?

GUIDING PRINCIPLES: How do we expect our members to behave at work? What ground rules do we have? What are our operating guidelines? What kind of climate do we have and want in our group?

A detailed team-building assessment exercise, based on the 6-point checklist, is provided in this unit.

For more information, contact organization Development and Training at your site.

Objectives



- identify what team leaders need to know create high performing, effective teams
- discuss stages of team development
- identify key team leadership skills
- discuss common team problems and how to deal with them
- think about ways your team presently operates and look for ways to improve its effectiveness.

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Agenda



- Characteristics of an Effective Team
- The Effective Team Environment
- Key Team Processes
- High Performance Teams
- Stages of Team Development
- Effective Team Leadership
- Team Leader as “Coach”
- Common Team Problems
- Team Ground Rules
- The Six-Point Checklist
- Traits of Effective Team Members
- Action Plan

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UNIT 2: TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

Introduction

The pressures of today's marketplace require that organizations perform at their best. This means full participation of all members, to the best of their ability. All organizations require their people, at times, to work in groups. The most successful organizations find ways to realize the full potential and capability of groups. They:

- understand the important contribution that groups can make; effective groups usually outperform individuals
- are comfortable establishing, empowering and promoting the participation of people in groups;
- value change and adaptation as key to improving productivity, quality and customer service; and
- are constantly looking for creative ways to use groups to drive performance improvements.

Simply put, effective organizations cannot function without groups.

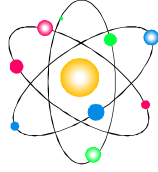
In high-performing organizations, the most successful groups function as "teams". Teams flourish in organizations which create a **climate** where people want to work together giving their best efforts.

Content

- Characteristics of an Effective Team
- The Effective Team Environment
- Key Team Processes
- High Performance Teams
- Stages of Team Development
- Effective Team Leadership
- Team Leader as "Coach"
- Dealing with Common Team Problems
- Establishing Team Ground Rules
- The Six-Point Checklist
- Traits of Effective Team Members
- Action Plan
- Questionnaires for Team Building

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What is a Team?



A **team** can be defined as two or more people who interact with each other regularly and who mutually influence each other to achieve common goals.¹

A key factor which differentiates teams from work groups involves the **interdependence** of people. As Stephen Covey points out in *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*,

“Interdependence opens up worlds of possibilities for deep, rich, meaningful associations, for geometrically increased productivity, for serving, for contributing, for learning, for growing.”²

Characteristics of an Effective Team

Effective teams get their job done and take care of their members' needs at the same time. Achieving team effectiveness poses many challenges for managers, team leaders and members alike. Several important characteristics shared by successful teams are described below:

1. Effective teams share a goal/mission that everyone knows, agrees on and is committed to accomplishing.

Team members understand the goals because they have participated in them. There is a lot of discussion about the tasks and how to best accomplish them. Everyone feels a high degree of involvement and believes that s/he makes a difference to the overall result. Roles are clear, appropriate, understood and accepted. Team members have clear authority and sufficient resources to carry on their jobs.

2. Effective teams communicate openly and honestly.

Team members are comfortable, informal, involved and interested. Trust replaces fear and people are able and willing to take risks. The climate encourages growth and learning. Team members feel free to express their thoughts, feelings and ideas. They listen to each other and make suggestions without fear of being criticized or embarrassed. They encourage and support one another. Conflict and disagreement are considered normal and are discussed with a view to finding a solution.

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3. Effective teams cultivate a sense of belonging to the team and commitment to its actions.

There is a sense of participation and a high level of involvement. From this comes strong commitment and pride in the team's accomplishments.

4. Effective teams have clear processes for: gathering and sharing of information, making decisions, and implementing decisions.

Team members make decisions together that are well-informed, and accepted and supported by the entire team. These processes fit the team's goals, the individual team members styles, and the available time.

5. Effective teams value diversity as an asset.

Team members are viewed as unique people with valuable talents and resources. Diversity of opinions, ideas and experience is encouraged, in contrast to "group think" which views differences as departures from the group's norm. A high degree of respect exists among members.

6. Effective teams encourage creativity and risk-taking.

Team members are encouraged to take appropriate risks. Mistakes are regarded as part of learning through trying different approaches. New ideas and suggestions for doing things better are continually sought.

7. Effective teams practice continuous improvement.

The team periodically reviews its processes and practices, and looks at what areas might be ripe for improvement. Through open discussion, the team attempts to anticipate problems before they arise and develop solutions. Learning is considered a natural and essential part of team activity.

8. Effective teams are interdependent.

Team members understand that they need each others' knowledge, skills and resources to produce results which they could not achieve alone. Members depend on one another for defined contributions and support in meeting team goals. They can count upon one another for support.

9. Effective teams have supportive leadership.

Whether the group has a designated leader or leadership shifts among the members, the leader does not dominate the group.

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Different members are used as resource leaders because of their knowledge or experience. The focus is on how to get the job done, not on who controls the team. Team members are empowered to do the job they must do. Everyone is involved in the functioning of the team.

The Effective Team Environment

In light of the previous discussion, the following points summarize the conditions required to create an effective team environment,

- ⇒ trust
- ⇒ respect
- ⇒ support
- ⇒ a sense of belonging and commitment to the team
- ⇒ a shared vision
- ⇒ open and honest communication
- ⇒ involvement of all members
- ⇒ empowerment
- ⇒ a learning environment

Each of these factors is important, and they are also highly interdependent. All of these factors are critical to achieving an effective and high performing team. Leaders can help create these conditions through the following behaviours...

1. Trust, Respect and Support

- Encourage and protect team member diversity in views, backgrounds, and experiences.
- Inspire teamwork and mutual support through example.
- Keep your commitments and expect the same from all team members.

2. Commitment to the Team

- Support and positively represent the team to senior management, peers and other employees.
- Ensure that individual member and team accomplishments are recognized and celebrated appropriately.

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3. Shared Vision

- Clarify the tasks to be accomplished.
- Establish and communicate a vision about what the members can achieve as a team.
- Encourage team members to participate in creating their vision of what the team can accomplish.

4. Open and Honest Communications

- Communicate fully and openly; welcome questions; avoid the “need to know” limitations.
- When seeking solutions, encourage members to suspend assumptions, reflect on their own thoughts and feelings, clearly voice these, inquire about and listen to opinions of others, and be less reactive.

5. Empowerment and Involvement of all Members

- Encourage members to participate.
- Make it easy for others to see opportunities to work together.
- Clarify that problem-solving is a responsibility of all team members.
- Mediate conflicts before they become destructive.

6. A Learning Environment

- Guide team members to determine where they actually are relative to their goals, and to clarify why the gaps exist and how to bridge them.
- Surface and treat conflicts as learning situations. Peter Senge, in his book “The Fifth Discipline” says, “One of the most reliable indicators of a team that is continually learning is the visible conflict of ideas. In great teams, conflict becomes productive.”

Key Team Processes

A process is a series of tasks or actions that go together to produce a specific end-product or service. The most important processes for a team to use, in addition to their technical and work-related processes, are those techniques which are used to help the group move towards its goals. These processes are critical to the success of the team.

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- **Problem-Solving and Decision-Making**
 - how the team identifies problems and seeks alternatives
- **Goal Accomplishment**
 - the ability to achieve goals by working together
 - the ability to implement decisions
 - Team success is impacted by the extent of integration, coordination and cooperation among members with regard to achieving goals.
- **Resolving Conflicts**
 - how members resolve issues such as allocation of resources, overlapping roles and personality conflicts
 - Success here is influenced by the level of openness and trust among members, and their ability to provide constructive feedback and discuss issues openly and honestly.
- **Communications**
 - communicating with members and other groups
 - gathering and sharing of information
 - encouraging all team members to participate
 - communication of goals, roles and responsibilities
 - providing feedback and celebrating team successes
- **Continuous Learning and Improvement**
 - focusing on continuous improvements to products, services and team member capabilities
 - multi-skilling and increase in core competencies
 - regular use of open dialogue, openly expressing all views and seeking mutual solutions that may be different from previous approaches

High Performance Teams

High performance teams exhibit many of the characteristics of other effective teams, such as a shared purpose and goals, regular interactions and mutual support. The dimension that sets high performance teams apart from other work groups is that their members *“are also deeply committed to one another’s personal growth and success”*.³ This exceptional personal commitment by each member can “transcend” the team, enabling it to achieve results that far exceed the performance of other teams.

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Characteristics of a High Performance Team

- increased attention to the team's performance goals;
- a stronger team approach to solving problems and carrying out decisions;
- the need for the team to support each member to ensure their success -- "the notion that if one of us fails, we all fail";
- the achievement of greater team flexibility through development of interchangeable skills by members;
- a higher incidence of sharing leadership than is exhibited by other types of teams; and
- a sense of humour and higher level of member satisfaction and enjoyment with the group process.⁴

The team leader plays a key role in helping the work group to become an effective and high performing team. Actions the leader can take are covered later, under the section "Team Leader as "Coach".

Impact of Effective Teams on Organizations

Successful teams can work effectively in many parts of an organization, across departmental and functional lines, and make major contributions to its success. Research conducted in several major international organizations by Allen Mackay indicates that where companies have established and supported effective teams, they have very often:

- improved the way in which the business is operated;
- improved levels of customer satisfaction and retention as a result of reduced error and enhanced quality;
- achieved and sustained reductions in operating costs, particularly where teams are involved in identifying and resolving problems;

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- improved productivity, resulting from fewer problems related to coordination, integration, scheduling, etc;
- increased revenues and profit margins;
- improved levels of trust, employee empowerment and satisfaction; and
- achieved more effective alignment of staffing and workloads.⁵
- lower absenteeism, turnover and grievances.

When people are involved in teams and can participate in decisions that affect their work, there is less resistance to change and greater commitment. Increased employee satisfaction and a sense of empowerment generally result in the above benefits.

The Stages of Team Development

As team members begin to work together, they must learn to cope with various emotional and group pressures. The team can expect to proceed through several fairly predictable stages as it evolves into an effective work unit.

Team members must get to know each other, understand their respective roles, identify and work out appropriate group behaviour and, finally, learn how to coordinate their work and social activities.

Several models have been developed to describe these stages of team growth, but one of the most useful is that outlined by Bruce W. Tuckman.⁶ The four stages, as Tuckman expressed them, are:

1. Forming
2. Storming
3. Norming
4. Performing

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Stage 1: FORMING

The first stage of team development is a period of exploration, testing and orientation. Individuals have to get to know each other and assess the benefits and costs of being part of the group.

People tend to be polite with each other during this phase, and rely on some initial rules and structure set out by the formal or informal leader. This is a stage during which people move from “individual” to “member” status.

As a new group member, you would likely experience some of the following **feelings**:

- A sense of excitement, anticipation and optimism.
- Some personal pride at being selected to be part of the group.
- Some uncertainty, anxiety, fear and perhaps suspicion about the work ahead.

Potential Stage 1 Behaviours

- Talk about “safe” topics like the weather, sports events and local news which have no relation to the group’s purpose.
- Talk about general work issues, as familiarity and comfort levels build. Members will try to define the task and decide how it will be achieved.
- Efforts to determine which behaviours are appropriate, what contributions people should be expected to make to the group and how to deal with group problems.
- Decisions on information requirements for the group.
- Vague and abstract discussion of ideas and issues which often are not relevant to the task, causing impatience for some members.

Difficulty identifying relevant problems, complaints about the organization and obstacles to achieving the task.

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Stage 2: STORMING

This stage presents a lot of problems for teams. Members begin to realize that the task is different and often tougher than they initially thought. Conflicts will likely erupt as members may compete for leadership and other positions on the team. Coalitions or cliques may form to try to influence the group's efforts to reach agreement on important issues like its purpose or goals.

Members may become impatient with the group's lack of progress but, lacking experience in group decision-making or conflict resolution, they often argue strenuously about their roles or what actions should be taken by the team. There is often a tendency for members to rely primarily on their personal and professional experience to work through these challenges, rather than to try and collaborate with other members of the team.⁷

As a team member, you may well experience some of the following **feelings**:⁸

- Resistance to change, particularly directed towards the task at hand and the approach you may have to take (which may differ from what you are used to).
- A roller coaster of attitude shifts about the team and the possibilities of success with these tasks.

Potential Stage 2 Behaviours

- Arguments between members about issues unrelated to the main tasks.
- Increased competition, defensiveness, tension and possibly jealousy between members; development of informal sub-groups and factions.
- Team members creating unrealistic goals and growing concerns about "too much work".
- The beginning of acceptance of members' roles and creation of a status order within the team.

This is a critical stage in the team's growth. The disagreements could become so strong that they threaten the continued existence of the team. But if they can work it through successfully, a structure of roles and norms should develop which will enable the team to achieve goals that the members could not accomplish on their own.⁹

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Stage 3: NORMING

By this stage, members have established expectations and developed team ground rules or norms to help them interact more effectively. The team begins to develop a real sense of cohesiveness as members accept the team, their roles and the diversity/individuality of the other members.

Through interaction, openness and feedback, members achieve a better understanding and acceptance of each other. The level of conflict and emotional tension is reduced through the emergence of more cooperative and collaborative relationships.

As a team member, you will likely experience some of the following **feelings**:¹⁰

- An improved ability to express criticism in a positive way to your team members.
- Acceptance as a full member of the team.
- A sense of optimism and relief about the success and future prospects for your team.

Potential Stage 3 Behaviours

- Increased levels of friendliness, harmony, exchanges of confidences and sharing of personal concerns among team members.
- Reduction in levels and frequency of conflict.
- Establishment of team ground rules and behavioural boundaries and expectations (norms).
- Development of team cohesiveness with consensus forming around team goals, norms and member roles.

The team's ability to reach consensus about its purpose helps to create a sense of group identity among members and build cohesiveness. With lower levels of conflict and greater team harmony, members can focus more attention and energy on achieving the team's goals and completing tasks.

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Stage 4: PERFORMING

In this stage, the team achieves a higher level of task focus because there is a shift from establishing and maintaining harmonious member relations to accomplishing the team's objectives. Team members have learned to coordinate their activities and work out their conflicts.

They can now get on with performing their jobs -- identifying, diagnosing and resolving problems, and initiating changes.

As a team member, you may experience some of these **feelings**:

- A higher level of satisfaction with the team's efforts and progress.
- Greater insight into the interpersonal and team processes, and better understanding and appreciation for the talents, strengths and weaknesses of the other members.

Potential Stage 4 Behaviours

- Greater expertise in preventing or resolving problems that arise in the team.
- More flexibility and willingness of members to change.
- Higher cohesiveness among team members.

The time it takes to move through the phases will vary according to different influences, some of which are:

- familiarity of the members with each other
- clarity of purpose
- style of team leadership
- skills of team members
- changes in team members
- deadlines and external influences
- accessibility of resources.

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Effective Team Leadership

For many years, trainers and researchers have been asking people in organizations, what qualities do the best leaders possess? The answers have been surprisingly consistent!

An effective leader:

- ⇒ is honest and trusted.
- ⇒ is a good listener and communicator.
- ⇒ cares about the work and people.
- ⇒ believes in team members.
- ⇒ is competent and respected.
- ⇒ leads by example -- words and actions are consistent.

Accelerated changes in technology, competitive conditions and stakeholder needs have prompted organizations to seek out more innovation and productivity. For these reasons, it is important for those “in charge” to create a climate that enables each person to develop and contribute to their full potential. For experienced managers, this likely involves a re-evaluation of their leadership style.

Effective team leaders recognize that there has been a fundamental change in the perception of what constitutes good team leadership attitudes. They see a necessary shift from the traditional focus on control and compliance to a focus on gaining commitment and on team-centered leadership.

The following chart illustrates some important differences between the two management paradigms, or ways of thinking:

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A Control-centered Leader:	A Team-centered Leader:
<p>Emphasizes meeting current goals, which can inhibit long-term thinking.</p> <p>Places limits on innovation and risk-taking.</p> <p>Places boundaries between team members.</p> <p>Resents or distrusts employees who know their jobs better than him/herself.</p> <p>Sees group problem-solving as a waste of time or an abdication of managerial responsibility.</p> <p>Controls information. Communicates only what team needs or wants to know.</p> <p>Ignores conflict between staff members or with other groups.</p> <p>Slow to recognize individual or group achievements.</p> <p>Modifies group agreements to suit personal convenience.</p> <p>Elicits compliance.</p> <p>Believes supervision is necessary.</p> <p>Focuses on hierarchy.</p> <p>Has bias for functional organizations.</p> <p>Manages by policy.</p> <p>Favours audit and enforcement.</p> <p>Believes in selective information.</p> <p>Believes bosses should make decisions.</p> <p>Emphasizes ends justifying means.</p> <p>Encourages hard work.</p> <p>Rewards compliance and loyalty.</p>	<p>Takes current goals in stride. Provides a vision regarding what team can achieve.</p> <p>Inspires people to “think ahead” and find new, better ways of doing things.</p> <p>Encourages members to work together and have joint responsibility for work.</p> <p>Looks for people who excel and can work constructively with others. Encourages and facilitates this behaviour.</p> <p>Promotes problem-solving by the team members. Provides what the team needs so they can solve problems themselves.</p> <p>Communicates fully and openly. Welcomes questions. Allows the team to filter info.</p> <p>Surfaces and resolves conflict. Uses it to identify better ways of doing things.</p> <p>Recognizes individual and team successes at the right time in an appropriate manner.</p> <p>Keeps commitments and expects the same in return.</p> <p>Engenders commitment.</p> <p>Believes education is necessary.</p> <p>Focuses on customers.</p> <p>Has bias for cross-functional organizations.</p> <p>Manages by principle.</p> <p>Favours learning processes.</p> <p>Believes in open information.</p> <p>Believes workers should make decisions.</p> <p>Emphasizes compatibility of ends & means.</p> <p>Encourages balance between work and personal life.</p> <p>Rewards innovation and personal growth¹¹</p>

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Beliefs, Skills, and Attitudes of Effective leaders

Leaders of high performance teams consistently demonstrate the following beliefs, attitudes and skills:

People are a company's most valuable resource.

Human beings have unlimited potential to grow, develop and learn. The leader's role is to help each team member achieve his or her potential.

Teams need to be constantly developed.

The leader's role is that of teacher, coach, counselor and trainer.

The leader is there to be a resource in support of the team. This means removing barriers, providing tools, whatever they may be, and providing information directly to the team.

Everyone is capable of making decisions that affect them, provided they are given the appropriate information and training.

People do not resist changes they have been involved in making.

Gaining true employee involvement is an ongoing process, not a one-time effort.

If a change is affecting the team, the leader must be a role model of the "new" way.

The leader must be able to "let go" in order to empower people, but not "dump" on them. The leader must train and coach people first so they will be ready and able to succeed.

The leader realizes mistakes are unavoidable, and helps people learn from them.

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Team Leader as “Coach”

If you believe that the team leader is the person in charge of getting the work done, you may tend to “tell” your team members what has to be accomplished, who will do the work and how it will be done. In other words, you will act like the team’s “boss”.

However, if you think that the team leader’s role is to create an environment of teamwork and to develop members’ skills, you will more likely look for ways to develop and train. In short, you will act more like the team’s coach.

Most leaders of high performance teams act as coaches.

Coach by:

- **Watching what’s happening with the team and finding out what they need.**

As leader, your job is to help the team grow from its formation to the high performing stage. During the early stages, provide more structure, guidance and direction. Clarify tasks, goals, management’s expectations, and the way their performance and contributions will be measured.

- **Learning to give up some control as your role changes from manager to leader.**

In your coaching role, you should be working with the team to develop their information-sharing and decision-making skills, and preparing them to tackle new problems and tasks. As they develop these competencies, you should give them more room to operate, freeing up your time to focus on strategic issues. Share your leadership and decision-making responsibilities. The key here is to strike a balance between giving up some control vs. providing more guidance, and solving the tough problems yourself vs. helping others to learn.

- **Maintain a balance between your contributions as a team member and those you make as the leader.**

Use your leader’s perspective to help the team focus on their purpose, goals and approach.

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- **Provide direction and support**
Ensure that you don't sacrifice the commitment of members to gain compliance by ordering or controlling their work.
- **Focusing on building commitment and confidence.**
In effective teams, members are committed and accountable on an individual as well as a team basis. Leaders should aim to build each member's level of commitment and confidence as well as that of the whole team. Involving the team in decisions, planning and goal-setting, responding to their input, recognizing and noting good work and ideas, openly building upon cumulative efforts all help achieve this.
- **Looking for opportunities to strengthen the mix and level of skills and abilities.**
Members of high performance teams generally have a broader range and depth of skills and experiences. With encouragement and support from the leader and other team members, individual members can enhance their technical, functional, problem-solving, decision-making, interpersonal and teamwork skills by taking some risks and facing some new challenges. Ask team members where they need help and help them get it. Strengthen skills thorough job rotation, training and special assignments.
- **Taking the lead role in managing the team's relationships and eliminating barriers.**
This is a key element in establishing mutual trust between the leader and members. The leader manages many of the team's contacts with the rest of the organization, and communicates the team's purpose, goals, needs and approach. Often this may require that you "run interference" for the team to eliminate barriers which hinder their progress.
- **Sharing work opportunities, assignments, and the credit for successful achievement with your team members.**
Effective leaders find ways to share the best assignments and opportunities with their team without abdicating responsibility for guidance, monitoring and control.

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- **Doing your share of the team's work.**
Notwithstanding their position, effective leaders contribute to the team's success in whatever ways the team requires, just as would any other member.
- **Celebrating successes and not blaming or allowing specific individuals to fail.**
Effective leaders recognize that it is the team which succeeds or fails. Everyone shares in the wins and individuals are not singled out as causes for failure.¹²
- **Encourage participation from all members.**
By starting with team work-planning sessions (such as Planning For Results) and following through on these plans, you can create buy-in and motivation. Ensuring all members have important roles to play, paying equal attention to individuals, and emphasizing the importance of their contributions within the team framework can help ensure cooperation and equal involvement.

Dealing With Common Team problems

Every team experiences problems which can be serious enough to erode morale, interfere with getting the job done, or possibly even destroy the group. The team may not have the right mix of people or skills. They may have poor resources and support, or ineffective leadership. Highly motivated teams generally confront these obstacles head-on with a "can do" attitude and work through them.

Common Team Problems

1. Conflict.

Work-related conflicts, including issues like how to allocate resources, overlapping roles and personality conflicts can best be resolved through open and frank discussions. Effective team leaders identify conflicts early, get the parties involved in openly surfacing their views and then listening to each other, in order to surface improved ways of doing things and find common solutions.

2. Reacting to negative feedback as an attack.

One of the more difficult interpersonal challenges involves delivering constructive feedback in such a way that it will not be received as a personal attack. Team consultant Maureen O'Brien refers to this ability as a "gift". The four steps she recommends for giving constructive negative feedback are:

- ⇒ Give your teammate some advance notice that you want to provide feedback.
- ⇒ Describe the behaviour which is creating the problem, being careful to avoid colourful adjectives, and indicate the consequences of this behaviour.
- ⇒ Provide examples to put your feedback in context.
- ⇒ Offer suggestions to help correct the problems.¹³

3. Stalled progress.

Depending on which stage the group is at, problems may be due to inexperience, absence of consensus or support, indecision or reluctance to break up the team. An effective coaching response is to focus the team on the objective and on identifying blockages and needs which must be addressed in order to go forward.

4. Dominating team members.

Members who tend to talk too much at team meetings or group discussions can impede the team's progress and cause impatience and disinterest among other members. Watch for clues like doodling, rolling eyes and staring off into space. Effective leaders act as gate-keepers, channeling discussions and participation and moving the team forward. You may have to meet separately with the troublesome person to provide constructive feedback and coach them in overcoming their behaviour.

5. Experts who override others.

Experts are usually a valuable resource to the team, but can cause problems if they override members' ideas without a fair hearing. Members whose ideas have been shot-down become reluctant participants. Team leaders can reiterate the importance of examining all views in the team meetings or solicit the expert's input privately.

6. Reluctant participants.

Some team members are uncomfortable speaking in a group, even though they have valuable contributions to make. Effective teams ensure they have mechanisms in place to encourage “the introverts to talk and the extroverts to listen”.¹⁴ Leaders can act as gate-keepers encouraging and welcoming everyone’s participation. Again, personal feedback and coaching may be needed.

7. Reaching hasty conclusions.

Teams are sometimes pushed by members who are impatient for results and prepared to take shortcuts. Constructive feedback from the team leader or other members can help the group reach a healthy balance between data collection, analysis, and decision-making.

8. Unfocussed discussions.

Members sometimes stray from the real purpose of the meeting or project, try to avoid dealing with a sensitive topic. The team may be talking, but not moving in any productive direction. An effective leader uses an agenda to help keep meetings on track, and uses project plans to keep the team focused.

9. Team burnout.

Burnout can be a factor with high performance teams, primarily due to increased workloads and insufficient recognition for excellent performance. Effective strategies include reexamining work design, assessing priorities, re-allocating tasks and workloads, refocusing on effectiveness, and eliminating unnecessary work.¹⁵

10. Avoiding decisions.

At times, members may run into difficulty making decisions in complex or unclear situations. Deferring decisions slows progress and sets a precedence for putting things off. The leader can help by working with the team to set a criteria to identify what decisions that can be deferred, and for how long. Also, the leader should ask members to identify the cause of the discomfort and to indicate what is needed to make the decision. Ask: How important is the decision? How long can it be delayed without adversely affecting the project?

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Establishing Team Ground Rules

To improve group processes and increase effectiveness, the team must establish and agree on procedures or ground rules by which all members will conduct their work and relationships. This is especially important with a team that has been having problems, and is very relevant to teams in the Forming and Storming stages of development.

Each team will vary somewhat in the specific rules it creates, due largely to the differences between individual team members, leadership style, the groups' existing relationship, etc.

Why have team ground rules? Here are some reasons:

- To clearly state the values of the team.
- To make certain every team member knows and understands what is expected of him/her.
- To develop standards of behaviour that support the needs of the team members and the company.
- To help the team evaluate its performance.
- To help a new team member know what is expected of him/her.
- To have everyone on the team discuss and agree on what is important to him/her and to provide a guide for behaviour.
- Others:
-

Some examples of team ground rules are:

1. meetings will always start on time
2. decisions shall be made by consensus
3. leadership at group meetings will rotate among team members on a monthly basis
4. Others:
- 5.

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The specific ground rules selected by a team are not as important as **agreement** by all the team members on the rules. Reaching **consensus** is the most important part of developing ground rules. Consensus is reached when all members of a team can say that they agree with the decision, or they don't agree but they have had an opportunity to fully express their views, and they agree to support the group's decision.

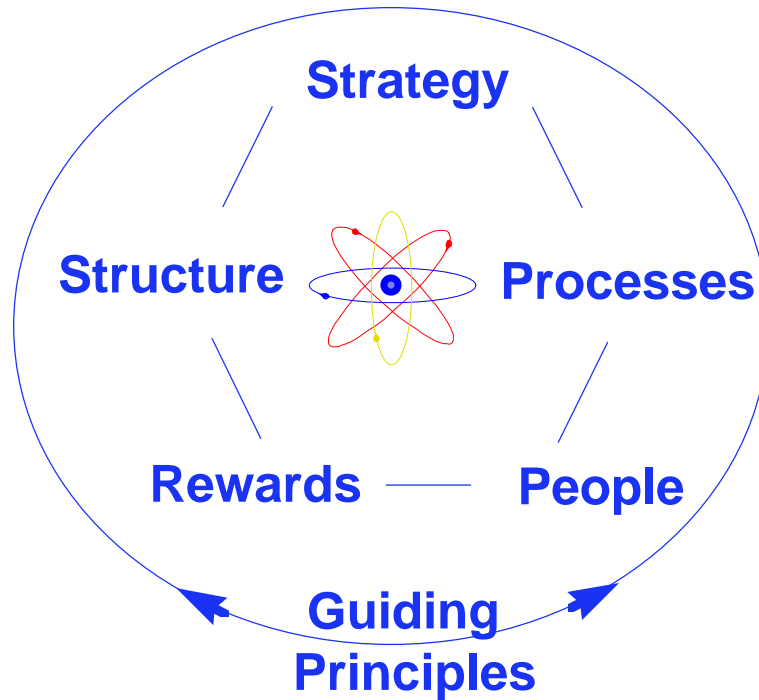
In Consensus, We...

- ⇒ ensure all team members have an opportunity to provide their input. All team members need to have an opportunity to speak and be heard!
- ⇒ encourage quieter or less confident members to speak up.
- ⇒ encourage some members "give up the floor". Some may need to be moderated to allow others to have an opportunity to express their views.
- ⇒ agree unanimously where possible.
- ⇒ ensure that ALL members are part of the process.
- ⇒ ensure that members can live with and support the ground rules agreed upon.
- ⇒ commit fully to the team, its goals, and the process. This is critical!

It may not always be possible to reach unanimous agreement. If this is the case, it is important that the members who are not part of the agreeing majority feel heard and that their reasons for not agreeing are acknowledged. It is essential that they feel comfortable enough with the decisions to agree to live with and support the ground rules which have been selected. Without this commitment, it will be impossible for the team to progress to the Norming and Performing Stages of Team Development, and it is unlikely they will ever be a high performing team.

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The Six-Point Checklist



This diagram depicts the 6-Point Checklist, which you will see in other MFR units as well as this one. It points us to six key areas we must consider, as leaders, in all elements of our leadership work. The checklist can be used as a reminder as we go through different decision-making processes and work through various tasks. Building an effective team is one such task!

Let's consider how each of the six areas can help you build an effective team.

STRATEGY concerns us with the purpose, direction and goals of the team, in relation to that of the larger organization. A clear purpose is vital to the functioning of any team!

PEOPLE are the team! Having the right people where and when you need them is essential for success. There is also the morale component to look after.

PROCESSES are how the people work together and how the work gets done. This includes the technology required to do the tasks.

REWARDS are important for aligning the goals of the team members with those of the organization and the team.

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STRUCTURE speaks for itself. It includes reporting relationships, where responsibility and decision-making power lie, and relationships or interfaces between team members and the team and other teams.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES are the basic beliefs the team hold about how to do work and how to behave. The word values and norms (unspoken rules of behaviour) are associated with this area.

The following questions can lead you and your team into thinking about the six areas identified on the checklist, as can using the Team Building Assessment questionnaire. The answers to these questions may require your team to work at more than one area!

1. What is our purpose as a team? (STRATEGY)
2. How can we accomplish our team goals?
(STRATEGY, PROCESSES)
3. What are our roles and responsibilities? (STRATEGY)
4. How do we prioritize our work? (PROCESSES)
5. How do we make decisions? Is this ideal, or do we want to change/improve our decision making process?
(PROCESSES & STRUCTURE)
6. How do we measure and recognize our performance, as a team? As individuals? (PROCESSES, PEOPLE, REWARDS)
7. How should we give and receive performance feedback?
(PROCESSES, PEOPLE)
8. How do we handle conflicts? How should we handle conflict?
How can we improve? (PROCESSES, PEOPLE, REWARDS)
9. What kind of climate do we want in our group?
(GUIDING PRINCIPLES)
10. How can we improve our current climate?
(PEOPLE, REWARDS, PROCESSES, STRUCTURE, GUIDING PRINCIPLES)

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11. What operating guidelines do we need? (attendance, vacation scheduling, team meetings, hours of work, etc.?)
(GUIDING PRINCIPLES, STRUCTURE)
-

Traits of Effective Team Members

How can a leader know if the steps they are taking to create an effective team are working? Look to the behaviours of the members! Members of effective teams **are driven a sense of participation, cohesiveness and unity of effort** in accomplishing the team's goals. Conversely, members of ineffective teams often focus on their own personal goals; achieve task goals at the expense of the group's relationships; withhold information they believe gives them an advantage over others; and value fast decision-making over consensus-building.

Members of Effective Teams...

- **are involved in developing team goals and are committed to them.** Team members work together to set their collective and individual goals. All understand their roles and how to achieve them, and support each other in these efforts.
- **work hard to understand their co-worker's point of view.** Team members are "other person" focused. They don't make judgments. They attempt to understand before forming an opinion. Members seek to resolve interpersonal conflicts.
- **place equal value on both personal needs and team goals.** People recognize that the more an individual's needs are met by the team, the more that individual will want to remain part of the team and help it succeed. Team members clearly articulate their own needs and listen to the needs of others. They find ways to meet their needs while achieving the team's goals.
- **share their honest thoughts, needs and feelings to build trust. They ask for and listen to those of others.** If a team member senses a lack of trust, they make an effort to do something about it.

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- **treat conflict as a healthy and unavoidable element of team functioning.** Team members develop the skills necessary to deal with conflict effectively. They use it as an opportunity for learning and progress.
- **have a say.** Team members are involved in decisions that affect them. All members may not completely agree with a decision, but everyone feels that they have been heard.
- **carry out the team's decisions,** as they have had input and are committed to all that the team does. This comes from a sense of loyalty and genuine interest in each other.

ACTION PLAN

What am I going to tell the members of my work team that I learned in this workshop?

What are two things that I can do on the job with my work team, starting tomorrow, to improve our effectiveness?

What can I do more of? Less of? Differently?

Exercise 1: Team Building Assessment

INSTRUCTIONS: Before embarking on a team building process, it is important to take stock of your team NOW. The statements that follow examine various aspects of teamwork. For each statement, decide the extent to which it best describes your team at the present time and circle the appropriate number. If a statement does not apply to your team, don't answer it, and move on to the next one.

GROUP 1 - PEOPLE, COMMUNICATION AND TEAM MEMBER RELATIONSHIPS	Never	Some of the time	Most of the time	Always
1. Team members trust each other.	1	2	3	4
2. Members trust the team leader.	1	2	3	4
3. The leader trusts team members.	1	2	3	4
4. Team members listen to one another.	1	2	3	4
5. The team leader is a good listener.	1	2	3	4
6. Team members communicate their thoughts and feelings openly and honestly.	1	2	3	4
7. The team listens to my ideas.	1	2	3	4
8. The team uses my ideas.	1	2	3	4
9. Problems between team members are confronted and addressed by the team.	1	2	3	4
10. Conflict helps us identify better ways of doing things.	1	2	3	4
11. People speak their minds. They don't agree just to go along with the majority and not make waves.	1	2	3	4
12. There is little or no win/lose competition among members.	1	2	3	4
13. Team members understand each other's goals, needs and problems.	1	2	3	4
14. Team members get the help they need from each other.	1	2	3	4
GROUP 2 - PROCESSES AND RESOURCES				
15. The team has effective processes for gathering and sharing all the information we need.	1	2	3	4
16. We are able to get all the resources we need.	1	2	3	4
17. Decisions are participative. People can influence decisions they need to be involved in.	1	2	3	4
18. Everyone on the team works to implement decisions once they are made.	1	2	3	4
19. The team gets the time it needs to consider options and	1	2	3	4

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- solve problems.
- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 20. Team meetings are effective: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 21. • Problems are discussed openly and solved. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 22. • New ideas are encouraged. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 23. • Everyone who needs to be there attends. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 24. • No one dominates. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 25. • Feedback is used to improve the meetings. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

PART 3 - STRATEGY & ROLES

- | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 26. The team uses an effective planning process. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 27. Everyone on the team has input on setting the mission and goals. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 28. Everyone on the team agrees with and supports the mission and goals. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 29. The team achieves the goals it sets out in its plans. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 30. I know what the boundaries are for risk-taking. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 31. Team member roles are clear to everyone. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 32. Roles are appropriate for people's expertise and fit their career interests. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

PART 4 - STRUCTURE

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 33. People have the necessary authority to carry out their role. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 34. The leader effectively represents the team to management | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 35. Upper level management supports the team. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 36. We have regular and effective interaction with customer groups. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 37. We have the connections we need within the larger organization to get our work done and meet our targets. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

GROUP 5 - REWARDS

- | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 38. I feel confident in my ability to do my job. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 39. Assignments present opportunities for development and acquisition of new skills. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 40. The team receives the technical training it needs. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 41. The team receives the interpersonal training it needs. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 42. I feel rewarded for my work. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 43. I feel recognized for my efforts. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 44. The team receives the recognition it deserves from management. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 45. There are adequate career paths for me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 46. I feel motivated. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 47. I feel committed. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

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GROUP 6 - GUIDING PRINCIPLES

48. Team members stick up for each other.	1	2	3	4
49. The leader sticks up for team members.	1	2	3	4
50. Team members stick up for the leader.	1	2	3	4
51. Others make me feel that I make an important contribution to the team.	1	2	3	4
52. The team has fun together and places importance on this.	1	2	3	4
53. Mutual support makes us able to approach and talk to each other with confidence.	1	2	3	4
54. The team leader takes the time to coach members individually and as a group.	1	2	3	4
55. We place high value on continually improving.	1	2	3	4

Total of Each Column

Grand Total

When you have completed the questionnaire, add up your score for each column in each of the six sections, and then add the sum of the columns together to arrive at a “Grand Total”, or overall score for that section. Share your Grand Totals with the other members of your team. Is there a wide range?

Identify the questions with the highest and lowest scores. Discuss what your team is doing well, and how it can improve.

Discuss your individual responses to each question to see how your colleagues responded. Look for questions where there is a big discrepancy in responses (ie. some members rate it 4, others 1). Explore the reasons for the differences.

Exercise 2: Assumptions About Teams

Instructions: We all have different “assumptions”, or beliefs about teams and how they should operate. To help your team develop its ground rules, begin by completing the following questionnaire privately. Then share your responses with the other members of your team.

Read each statement and then mark whether you **Agree (“A”)** or **Disagree (“D”)**.

When everyone has completed the questionnaire, share your individual responses and then reach consensus on whether your team agrees or disagrees with each statement.

1. A primary concern of all team members should be to establish an atmosphere where all are free to express their opinions. _____
2. An individual is able to achieve greater personal security in a team with an assertive leader with high expectations, than in a team with a less demanding, more passive leader. _____
3. There are often occasions when a team member should do what s/he thinks is right regardless of the group’s decision. _____
4. Members should be required to attend team meetings. _____
5. Generally, there comes a time when democratic group methods must be set aside in order to solve practical problems. _____
6. In the long run, it is more important to use involvement/participative methods than to achieve specific results by other means. _____
7. Sometimes it is necessary to push people to go in the direction you yourself think is right, even when they object. _____
8. It is sometimes necessary to ignore the feelings of others in order to reach a group decision. _____
9. When leaders are doing their best, you should not openly criticize or find fault with their conduct. _____

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10. Productive meetings require the leader and members to quickly get to the points they want to make. _____
11. By the time most us reach adulthood, it is impossible to change the extent to which we are willing to participate in group discussions. _____
12. Interest falls off when everyone in the group has to be listened to before making a decision. _____
13. Team work increases when the leader is friendly and close to team members. _____
14. A team is no stronger than its weakest member. _____
15. Once a team has a set way of working, it is almost impossible to change. _____
16. When a team gets a new leader, the way the team works together changes. _____
17. One team member can keep a whole team from improving its performance. _____
18. The key to successful team building is that all team members want to see the program succeed. _____
19. To become a really effective team, members should like one another. _____
20. A team decision is always better than an individual decision. _____

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