

ORGANIZATIONAL BLUEPRINT

for Embracing Working in Teams



INTRODUCTION

What makes a team a team? It's certainly not the label alone—many so-called teams within organizations are not actually working together toward a common goal. Just because an organization has assembled teams does not mean that the individuals actually work effectively together on projects and to solve problems. They do not necessarily rely on each other's strengths, bolstering each other's weaknesses in order to tackle challenges as a true team. Often—certainly more often than organizations like to admit—"team" members still work in silos.

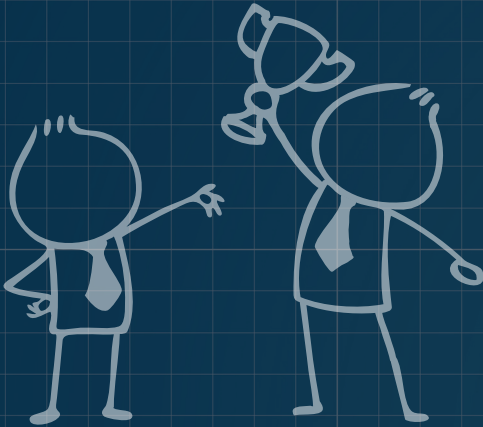
Study after study has attempted to uncover what makes a team tick. Researchers have tried to craft an ideal team with the perfect balance of leaders and followers, introverts and extroverts, renegades and Type A personalities. New research, however, has revealed that how a team works together is far more important than who is on which team.

When you have a team that's firing on all cylinders, comprised of members who trust and respect one another, magic happens.

Working in high-performing teams can be an incredibly productive way to build relationships, solve problems, meet goals, and innovate. In Google's recent study of its own teams, the tech giant found that when teams provided members with a high level of psychological safety—the idea that a team member can contribute and ask questions without the fear of being ridiculed or embarrassed—those team members were more likely to increase revenue, embrace diverse ideas, and be rated as effective twice as often by company leaders.



CORE CHARACTERISTICS OF A COHESIVE TEAM



TRUST ✓

Top teams build trust by validating the facts, establishing a shared interpretation, and acknowledging circumstances that may color the way that team members interpret facts differently.

COMMUNICATION ✓

Open communication helps establish a common language among team members, making it easier to diagnose problems and performance.

ALIGNED GOALS ✓

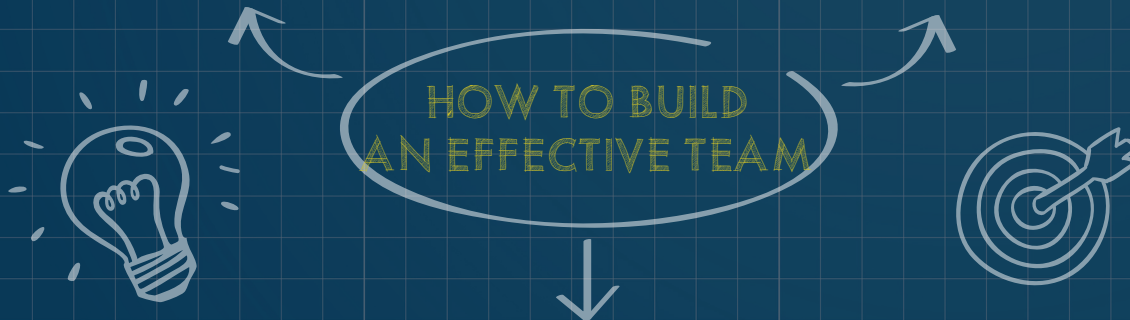
Team members see “the bigger picture,” instead of subscribing to a “me” mentality.

HAVE A CLEARLY DEFINED GOAL

The best teams are action-oriented, and clearly defining a team goal motivates team members and keeps them on task.

CLARIFY TEAM ROLES

When everyone understands how they’re expected to contribute to the team, you’ll avoid power struggles and effort duplication.



FOSTER A SAFE, SUPPORTIVE TEAM ENVIRONMENT

It’s scary to put yourself out there in front of a group. Foster a team atmosphere of support and enthusiasm, not judgment, in order to encourage contributions and questions from every team member.

TIPS TO GET EMPLOYEES TO WORK IN TEAMS

1. **BUILD** teamwork into your organization’s mission, vision, and goals.
2. **SET** goals for a group of individuals who wouldn’t typically work together—a clear, open line of communication back to you is key for this strategy.
3. **REWARD** team behavior with incentives that reinforce how much your organization values teamwork.
4. **ROTATE** through different types of incentives for teamwork (e.g. a day off, a restaurant gift certificate, or a bonus), because not all team members value the same incentives.
5. **CROSS-TRAIN** in order to expose individuals to other areas of the business.
6. **PROVIDE** teams with skill-building opportunities throughout the year, in areas such as collaboration, communication, goal-setting, problem-solving, building partnerships, sharing resources, and contingency-planning.
7. **ORGANIZE** informal social events so that colleagues can get to know one another and start building connections.
8. **FOSTER** a work environment where anyone can speak up or seek clarification without fear.
9. **INVEST** in leaders who can provide strong yet supportive direction for teams.
10. **PROVIDE** training to individuals in order to bolster their strengths and competencies so that they’ll have something unique and valuable to contribute to a team.

CONCLUSION

Teams serve many different functions and are made up of all kinds of individuals, but the best teams have one thing in common: trust. When team members respect one another and know they can count on each other in order to work through tough project challenges or even faltering team dynamics, a team will triumph. But building trust among a group of individuals in the workplace can be tough—especially without the skills or time to do so.

That's why building trust within a team is best facilitated when the team members are removed from the workplace and interacting with each other in a way that mirrors their real work projects, under the guidance of a skilled facilitator. This kind of team-building experience encourages building collaboration and trust within a safe environment that allows individuals to take risks without fear of the real-world consequences that may come along with possible failure.

Team members walk away with an understanding of one another's roles, strengths and weaknesses, and, most important, a newly minted bond of trust.

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